NEW

GIFT FROM THE GODS OCEAN
TECHNICIAN TED HEWSON
AIRWOLF ELITE
HUNCHBACK II OCEAN

MIKRO-GEN AND
LIFE OF WALLY

HERE THERE BE MONSTERS...
A major interview with Adventure Wizard Steve Jackson

SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW
EXCLUSIVE!
Map of Pryland
THE EDGE

CRASH COURSE
Our new regular educational column.

VIII

CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

The All-Singing,
All-Dancing Magazine – it's

ACE – ADVANCED COMPUTER ENJOYMENT

WITH SUMMER SMASHES FROM

TAI-PAN (128)
Ocean

EXOLON
Hewson

MICRONAUT ONE
Nexus

THE BIG SLEAZE
Piranha

THE SPECTRUM+3
– WHAT'S ITS FATE?

VOTE 87
The CRASHTIONNAIRE
RESULTS

SPECTRUM IT'S FREESCAPE!

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

The first ever look at Incentive's amazing
new 3-D games concept!

The Fred Astaire cover found an echo on page 63, detailing the results of the 1987 CRASHtionnaire, where his face (and Ginger Rogers's) appeared at the foot of a reproduced *Radio Times* page. That was to illustrate the   CRASHtionnaire's findings on your TV viewing habits, but it was a good example of the kind of detail the art department has to consider when laying out. In recent months everyone on the team had become more aware of the value of cross-referencing items within an issue, and even a tiny item like the Astaire picture can add to the enjoyment of reading a magazine.

Our big thrill (well, there were two really) was the new Spectrum +3 with its Amstrad-style disk drive. The reviewers weren't particularly impressed, largely because it was nothing more than a 128K with a disk drive instead of a datacorder, and also because there were no really good games available on the disks yet. Simon N Goodwin wasn't raving either, though he considered the machine professionally-made and well-documented, because he felt you could upgrade with better disk systems than the one Amstrad provided. Software houses were cautious about releasing disk games for a machine which nobody had bought yet, too, as one of CRASH's increasingly common in-depth news features reported. And there was the price – £249 was far too high. We all suspected Amstrad of hiking it so as not to ruin +2 high-street sales – a cynical supposition which would be proved all too true within a few months.

The other thrill was the arrival of Hewson's Uzi pump-action water pistols – prizes for the *Exolon* competition. Naturally they had to be tried out, and anyway, we needed photographs for the competition page. Richard, Roger, Robin and Skippy went out dry and came back soaked. Fortunately, as the picture showed, it was a hot day. Several innocent bystanders got squirted, including Markie Kendrick from art. His David Sylvian-style hairdo was ruined, so he sulked, which resulted in the little remark from the comps minion. But we all forgot; art always has the last laugh . . .

Tie-ins fared pretty badly; *The Living Daylights*, *Challenge Of The Gobots*, *Road Runner*, *Flash Gordon*, all did from bad to average, only Ocean's delayed *Tai-Pan* – and then only on the 128 – got anywhere, and that got a Smash.

Meanwhile, another of those news features focused on *The Bug* and its arguments with the software industry – the first sign of CRASH's reborn interest in fanzines, that was to show itself in a renovated Fanzine File.

During the latter part of the schedule, THE GAMES MACHINE got under way, and Graeme Kidd got his portfolio back as its Co-Editor. His other half turned out to be none other than Gary Penn, who had decided that he would like to work on the new magazine (Ciarán Brennan had taken over ZZAP!). They set themselves up in Gravel Hill, using the offices not long before vacated by LM. TGM – as it became known – was going to cover more than just computers, and one of the first articles written was a comparison of laser-tag systems. Suddenly the water pistols had a rival as numerous different electronic guns began to appear. It was not, of course, very conducive to hard work in the CRASH offices to know others were zapping each other (or 'testing') nearby, but somehow we managed to keep our reviewers' minds on their own games.

CRASH

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Well-used street fighter
offers services as a valued

RENEGADE

Lonely Palyar seeks

MERCENARY
to share large planet

Wanted! Empire Saviour.
Apply with credentials to

STIFFLIP & CO

Coward wants adventure in

CUSTERDS QUEST

For sale, dedicated console
SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

Someone talk to me please, I'm
DAVID AUBREY-JONES
and I programmed MERCENARY

Has homegrown software been
QUILLED UNTIL DEAD?

I'm quick-witted,
enterprising,
and I want a new

CRASH
CHALLENGE
in my life

SPECTRUM

WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN! WIN!

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

A BUBBLE BOBBLE ARCADE MACHINE

BIG SLEAZES &

CINEMA VOUCHERS

OCEAN SPORTS BAGS

& ATHENA
HERSELF

When he saw the preview copy of Ocean's Renegade, Oliver immediately said he wanted to do a cover of it when the review copy arrived. It was back to the single, powerful image, not unlike the notorious Barbarian cover, but with more restraint! It was rumoured that Roger Kean posed for Polaroid shots from which Oliver modelled the figure, and while Roger's undoubtedly something of a hunk, no-one believed that Oliver hadn't added considerably to the street fighter's physique to make it one of the best figure pictures he had done.

In two respects, this was a momentous issue. Once again the CRASH reviews underwent a change after much discussion. We had dropped the Value For Money rating with the July issue, largely because of the plethora of budget games. It had seemed to us impossible to continue calculating value for money in any meaningful way when games at £2 and £10 were considered as the same product. Also, some readers had more money than others, making an arbitrary measure of value for money meaningless. Actually, this move brought the CRASH ratings more into line with Roger Kean's original concept for reviews – that the reader should make the decision about the worth of a game after having read everything the reviewers had to say about it.

Now the Comments box was tweaked: Control Keys was dropped (the days when they made a significant difference to playability were over with universal joysticks and definable-keys options), Skill Levels was dropped in favour of a new Options line which also included details on definable keys, two-player modes and so on, Use Of Colour was merged with Graphics to make the comment more logical; but perhaps the most notable addition was that of each reviewer's Overall percentage, which explained more clearly how a game's Overall rating was arrived at.

And then there was the very first ever CRASH Challenge. ZZAP! had run reader/reviewer challenges since it started, and while they were fun to do, they were always a beast to organise. AMTIX! also had a challenge, so the pressure to include one in CRASH had been there for some time. We resisted the temptation easily enough seeing the other magazines struggling to get theirs sorted out each month. But the recent CRASHtionnaire had forced our hands without doubt. Too many readers wanted a CRASH Challenge for the magazine to refuse it.

In addition to the organisational problems (finding the time, inevitably a Saturday; getting the challenger to Ludlow; finding someone to take photos), there was always that nagging feeling in the reviewers' minds that they didn't want to make prats of themselves by losing to a *mere* reader. However, by dint of moral pressure, Barnaby persuaded Paul Sumner to go first – he's such a natural leader of men, it was argued, that if he did it, the others would feel bound to – and duly he met Mark Turford from Wednesbury on a Saturday afternoon, and just as duly, he lost. They played *Mikie* as Nick Roberts sat with pad and pen in hand to record this historic defeat. It was ignominy after the ZZAP! Challenge, where Julian Rignall won month after month till people began to think he was Jeff Minter.

Perhaps not quite so earthshattering, but much sillier still, was the arrival in CRASH of Markie Kendrick's King Grub, star of LM, T-shirts and . . . now the strip. Mark had created the character for LM, but when the magazine closed he refused to stop drawing the darned thing and eventually Roger was forced to give way and make room.

Advance planning for THE GAMES MACHINE resulted in a brochure for would-be advertisers, and in slightly modified form it appeared in the centre of this issue. Historically speaking, the most interesting aspect is the two serious-looking figures in the middle wielding laser guns. The man on the left was, of course, ZZAP!'s Julian Rignall, but few realised that the lass on the right was Glenys Powell, CRASH and ZZAP!'s Editorial Assistant, and, more importantly, Julian's fiancée.

And THE GAMES MACHINE was about to make history itself, with its press date shortly after this CRASH.

CRASH

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Run It Again
KICK-'EM-UPS

SELL YOUR OWN SOFTWARE
How to break in and make money

THE CRASH SAMPLER
Seven top games demos from the
details inside!

**CRASH
HISTORY
No. 1**
In words and covers

WIN an **OCEAN** custom-built Konami **COMBAT SCHOOL** arcade machine
and a dust, thrills and spills action-day out with **MIRRORSOFT**

This cover bore the CRASH Sampler cassette. Often cover mounts simply obscure the artwork underneath, but Oliver had always argued that if we did one, the mounted object would have to blend in as much as possible. The image itself could be anything, but there wasn't room for a full-blown painting based on the issue's contents; it was Roger who suggested returning to the monster that adorned the cover of Issue 1, only closer up, and have it hold the cassette in its claws. Oliver obliged with actinic light and machine-oiled fangs. It is fascinating to hold up the two covers and compare them.

The reference to CRASHes past on the cover was not entirely inadvertent. It already seems an age of its own now, but this was the first issue in which I began recalling the CRASH History of four years. And once again Roger Kean was on the move – well, almost, for he became Editorial Director of the three computer titles, while Barnaby Page became Managing Editor of CRASH. It wasn't much change for CRASH, where Barnaby had been running large sections of the magazine for some months anyway, but the simple change in titles was a sign of the year's third upheaval at Newsfield.

It would be wrong to publish many of the confidential details, so suffice it to say that there were serious problems with the way THE GAMES MACHINE was run by its two editors (fortunately, they didn't show in the finished product), and shortly after the completion of its first issue Graeme Kidd and Gary Penn were asked to leave the company. That didn't cause any catastrophes itself, but when ZZAP! Editor Ciarán Brennan decided a few days later to leave Ludlow and return to London a reshuffle was essential. Roger Kean assumed Graeme Kidd's role of general overseer, which job he had been effectively doing for several months at King Street anyway; Barnaby took over CRASH, Julian Rignall became Managing Editor of ZZAP!; and Dominic Handy became a full-time Staff Writer at CRASH.

A few weeks after all these changes, Newsfield left for the annual shebang at Olympia, the tenth *PCW* Show, where all the company's upheavals were soon subsumed under the chaos of meetings with software houses, signing autographs, selling CRASH T-shirts and fighting a spirited sticker war against *Your Sinclair*. In fact the only long-term casualty of Newsfield's internal changes was Fear & Loathing; John Minson, who had been a personal friend of the dismissed Graeme Kidd, was no longer happy with writing for CRASH.

However, a new writer and a new section arrived. Paul Evans, a CRASH reader from Liverpool, had written to Barnaby asking if he might try doing a column for CRASH on modem communications. The magazine's policy had always been to give anyone a try – and it had often had useful results – so Paul's column started in this issue, and soon became a regular feature.

Et Al also made its debut, the video section having transformed itself into this motley collection of videos, books, games and offbeat little snippets.

And as for the games . . . given the general mood at the time, one could be forgiven for thinking that Virgin's *How To Be A Complete Bastard* might have been made a Smash, but in fact the real problem with it was describing it in the magazine, given the language used in the game. I thought the review was as tasteful as could be, but we still got letters complaining, and even a notification from the Press Council about parental complaints. Sometimes you can't even call a spade a trowel.

INTO A NEW DIMENSION!

CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

SPECIAL 3-D ISSUE!

RAMPAGE PREVIEWED

WIN A RAMPAGING GORILLA SUIT from **ACTIVISION**

THE *THUNDERCATS* POUNCE

AT THE *PCW* SHOW
. . . the full story

JACK THE NIPPER SWINGS BACK in *Coconut Capers*

EXTRA!

3D

GLASSES INSIDE

GLASSES FREE WITH

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

Right Eye

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

WIN A VIDEO RECORDER AND NEW SPORTS GAMES from OCEAN

CRASH HISTORY No. 2
12 rare covers

The hectic days of The *PCW* Show were over – for everyone except the writers, still working on a seven-page news section which took stock of the software world as seen at Olympia. And back in Ludlow, the show went on. Barnaby's editorial informed us of yet another Ludlow College reviewer joining the ranks, which made up for the loss of Gareth Adams, who had moved away. Bym Welthy (an unlikely name), Barnaby told us, had first contributed to CRASH around the end of 1984 (the mention of Issue 3 was an error), having turned up then as a friend of Ben Stone's – to the inevitable greeting of 'Bym and Ben, the flowerpot men'. Back in those days he'd undergone the CRASH initiation ordeal, being photographed for CRASH T-shirt ads. And though it was a long gap till this month when his familiar red head of hair reappeared, he was excused modelling T-shirts again.

This was our special 3-D issue, the one with the free red-and-green glasses inside, and what fun it had been for the Art Department. When the 3-D special was first conceived two months earlier, the notion had been to do what all magazines do: buy the spectacles from the specialist company that made them, and send the artwork to be turned into 3-D to one of the two repro houses in Britain which specialise in 3-D techniques. It was only afterwards, when plans to have loads of illustrations and text in 3-D were well under way, that it was discovered that the cost of three-dimensionalising was approximately £400 per drawing!

Roger Kean decided we could do the work in-house. All we had to do, apparently (!), was discover what it was the specialists did. Roger and Markie Kendrick pored over 3-D comics (of which Markie has a big collection), and figured it out. The problem, though, was being able to proof the result so it could be looked at through the spectacles to see if it had worked properly. This was achieved through use of a special colour proofing system used in film planning to check complicated colour pages. The proofed drawings came out in process magenta and process yellow/cyan (to make green), and were not quite the colours used to print the pages, but close enough.

A scream of 'Eureka!' from film planning brought the entire building crowding into the room to peer through the spectacles in wonder. Throughout the following days it became a habit to leap up or downstairs as each new masterpiece was proofed, each getting more ambitious. The CRASH Charts, for instance, had eleven planes of depth to them, and the whole issue represented weeks of painstaking cutting, repasting and adjusting to get the effects right.

In the room next to film planning, Oliver Frey was setting up his new editorial department for THE GAMES MACHINE. It had been moved from Gravel Hill because of problems with screen photography, and also to keep all the editorial staff together. Downstairs in the CRASH room, Nick Roberts got the job he had originally written in for, compiling the Playing Tips; and another new face slipped quietly in to join Barnaby, Dominic and Ian Phillipson. David Peters was to meet the urgent need for a Subeditor to plough through the dozens of thousands of words which each CRASH contains, correcting and trimming where necessary. Meanwhile, Ben Stone moved to continue his training at another magazine in the area, *What's On In Shropshire*, though he continued to come into CRASH several times a week to write reviews and features.

CRASH

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INTO *THE* NEW DIMENSION!

DRILLER

ARRIVES

GUNSHIP
ready for action

DARK SCEPTRE
the Singleton saga

BOBSLEIGH
the ice have it

ALL THOSE TIE-INS
film and TV games

EXTRA! PULL OUT JUDGE DEATH!

DEATH

16 PAGES OF MEGA-CITY MAYHEM
from PIRANHA and TITAN BOOKS

WIN WIN WIN
AN EYEFUL OF GOODIES
from **ENDURANCE GAMES**

£500 WORTH OF GAMES AND GADGETS MUST GO
thanks to **GREMLIN GRAPHICS**

A PAPER BAG in Et Al

When you're wandering around a newsagent's, what grabs the attention is a cover with a striking design or image. In taking Incentive's Freescape game Driller *as a cover theme, Oliver gave himself a problem: to make it obvious what the painting was about, it had to contain recognisable elements from the game or the adverts, yet those were not action-packed,* Driller *being a more cerebral game. And of course much of* Driller's *power came from its peculiar 3-D graphics, which would be hard to recreate without straight copying. So he opted for the fish-eye lens image, a neat notion which wraps virtually 360° of view into one picture.*

Judge Death also appeared on the cover, drawing attention to the 16-page supplement inside the issue. This had been set up in conjunction with Piranha, to tie in with their *Judge Death* licensed game, after their interest in the *OINK!* supplement.

It was generally agreed that something from *2000AD* would be even more likely to involve CRASH and ZZAP!'s readers than *OINK!*. *2000AD*'s publishers were unwilling to participate – the title had just been bought by Robert Maxwell's BMPC group – but Titan Books, who held rights not to the *2000AD* characters themselves but to all the printed stories and artwork, were about to launch a Judge Anderson reprint series and were liaising with Piranha on the game of *Judge Death*. Titan were persuaded to contribute the supplement artwork, in colour.

The *2000AD* stories were in black and white, so the supplement in colour in CRASH and ZZAP! was something of a novelty. Titan's artist took the original pages, shot them to film to make a black-and-white image, then photocopied each page by a special process which rendered the image in a very pale blue. This gave him a design which he could colour in, the blue photocopy barely registering. The coloured pages were then sent to us together with the monochrome film, and we had the colour laser-scanned to provide the necessary four-colour separations. We combined them with the Titan's monochrome film, and suddenly, there was Judge Death in full colour.

Apart from the supplement – which prevented the third part of this CRASH History going in the issue, because there weren't enough pages to fit them both in as well as all the usual content of CRASH – and the background feature on *2000AD* and Titan Books, this CRASH had the first half of Robin Candy's huge feature on tie-ins. It was an appropriate time to examine the growth of tie-ins over four years; licences seemed to be growing ever more important, and CRASH was in retrospective mood anyway.

CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

Christmas Special

196 PAGES OF NEW REVIEWS TOP TIPS MAPS AND 3-D FEATURES

OVER 1,400 GAMES RATED IN THE CRASH DIRECTORY!

MATCH DAY II
from Ocean – in a league of its own

SIDEWALK
Infogrames gets street cred

COMPLETING THE CRASH HISTORY
with two more years of covers

PLUS: COIN-OP CAPERS GAMES OF '88 CRUNCH! – WRITING A FANZINE

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

FREE COLOUR POSTER INSIDE!

OLIVER FREY

WIN * *

A TRIP DOWN ARCADE ALLEY
from **ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE**

CINEMA VOUCHERS AND GAMES
from **GREMLIN GRAPHICS**

* **MORE THAN AN AVERAGE**
* * **CHRISTMAS HAMPER**
from **PIRANHA**

WIN

BOBSLEIGH
from **DIGITAL INTEGRATION**

A BALL AND *BALLBREAKER*
from **CRL**

ANY GAME IN CRASH
from **FATHER CHRISTMAS**

WIN

*

It is now almost exactly four years to the day that Roger Kean, Matthew Uffindell and myself sat around the only two typewriters we possessed, staring at blank sheets of paper, wondering what it was Spectrum-owners wanted to read, trying to conceive of the first edition of CRASH. I am not sure whether the three of us harboured ambitions of seeing the company grow; probably, but magazines are organic things, and somehow they grow of their own accord.

Newsfield was six people then: Roger, Oliver and Franco Frey, Matthew, Denise Roberts and myself part-time. At the moment of greatest growth (in terms of personnel), when LM was launched. it employed 60 full-time staff, also using eight college-age reviewers and some 30 regular contributors. Today there are just 34 full-time staff. It is a much slimmer operation, but also a much more streamlined and effective one.

We have seen Sir Clive Sinclair's 'toy' computer become the best seller in Britain, enjoying unrivalled software support from games which have ranged from utter drivel to demonstrations of the kind of skills that even mainframe programmers would envy. Recently we saw the 8-bit market start to falter as budget-priced games took hold and unit sales fell; this has particularly hit the Spectrum, yet the games are still being produced and we are always capable of being surprised by some new piece of cleverness. And despite the much discussed fall-off of sales generally, Spectrum magazines continue to ride high. The 'Shropshire fanzine' of early 1984 attained the highest sales in Britain of any computer magazine – and at one point the highest worldwide sales of any British computer magazine – and is still the market leader, along with its sister publication ZZAP!

It is difficult to predict what the next four years will bring, but you can be sure that CRASH will aim to be the best, whatever the incidental difficulties; as I write this, upstairs in the Art Department Markie Kendrick and his fellow designer Wayne Allen are laying out the Christmas Specials of CRASH and ZZAP!. We thought it would be a tough task for three, but unexpectedly just two people are doing it, because Art Director Gordon Druce has recently decided to leave. By the time you read this, however, you will know they succeeded nonetheless.

Have an enjoyable Christmas and see you next year.

At the conclusion of this history, I thought it would be appropriate to give a credit to some of the people who, either in the limelight or behind the scenes, have helped make CRASH through the years. In alphabetical order:
Gareth Adams, Wayne Allen, Kim Andersen, Jon Bates, Michael Baxter, Ciarán Brennan, Derek Brewster, Robin Candy, Sebastian Clare, Sue Collett, Ian Craig, Tim Croton, Mel Croucher, Karl Cowdale, Gordon Druce, Richard Eddy, Paul Evans, Tony Flanagan, Franco Frey, Oliver Frey, Kelvin Gosnell, Simon N Goodwin, Dominic Handy, Dave Hawkes, Philippa Irving, Brendon Kavanagh, Roger Kean, Markie Kendrick, Graeme Kidd, Carol Kinsey, David Lester, Gary Liddon, Tony Lorton, Fran Mable, Rosetta Macleod, Sean Masterson, John Minson, Sally Newman, Nick Orchard, Lee Paddon, Barnaby Page, Michael Parkinson, Chris Passey, David Peters, Mark Peters, Ian Phillipson, Cameron Pound, Glenys Powell, John Richardson, Jonathan Rignall, Julian Rignall, Denise Roberts, Nick Roberts, Mark Rothwell, Angus Ryall, Bill Scolding, Dick Shiner, Hannah Smith, Jeremy Spencer, Ben Stone, Paul Sumner, Garth Sumpter, Matthew Uffindell, Massimo Valducci, Bym Welthy, David Western, Nik Wild; **plus** all the guys at Scan Studios, Neil Townley and everyone at Carlisle, and John and Jo at Tortoise Shell.

And John Edwards, who got in all those adverts at the start that paid for it.

game we've ever better than Out Run!"

SUPER HANG-ON

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- Push your turbo charged racing machine into 18 progressive stages racing across Asia, Africa, America and Europe.

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S O F T W A R E

CRASH

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BEAT THE ALIENS WITH HANNAH SMITH'S PLAYING TIPS

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

WIN A WURLITZER JUKEBOX!

OLIVER FREY

MORE MAPS THAN AN ATLAS!!
PCW SHOW TICKETS FOR FREE!

Three new names appeared on this issue's masthead. Ian Craig was a well-known commercial illustrator, and some of his computer-related work had appeared the previous year in the Issue 21 On The Cover feature. The object was to have someone to help with the massive workload of illustrations, which up till then had all been on Oliver's shoulders. Tony Flanagan was a college lecturer from near Telford who wanted to move into journalism. He became the third Staff Writer for CRASH, but his time at the Towers turned out to be short. The third name had a familiar ring about it, especially to ZZAP! readers, for it was Julian's brother, Jonathan Rignall. The increasingly complex film-planning work we were undertaking in-house meant that Matthew Uffindell had less and less time to spare in the process camera room making halftone pictures. So Jonathan was brought into the department as a process-camera operator.

The month of July saw much activity on the new magazine, too – LM had become a reality, a launch date was set for a free copy with the Christmas Specials of the three computer titles, and Roger Kean was beginning interviews for the large new editorial team that would be required for this ambitious project. It was also clear that the King Street offices could no longer cope. Newsfield had been searching for over a year for premises big enough for expansion, but there was nowhere available in Ludlow. So a large semidetached house similar in size to the King Street headquarters was purchased and converted to offices for administration and LM editorial. This was on Gravel Hill, Ludlow (once misspelled 'Grovel Hill', and it would soon be nicknamed 'The Grovelry' since it was where the pay cheques were issued . . .). But the move was still over a month away as the August issue started.

In the meantime, the tiny CRASH office was even more cramped, so Tony Flanagan was dispatched to Liverpool to interview Software Projects about their forthcoming conversion of *Dragon's Lair*. Interest ran high, partly because of *Dragon's Lair* arcade fame, partly because no-one could see how Coleco's complex, interactive game would come out on a home micro. It was hoped they would do better with it than US Gold did with the conversion of *Kung Fu Master*, a flaccid beat-'em-up which got 56% – the same as *Subterranean Nightmare*, but the latter was a £2.99 budget game under US Gold's new Americana label. Americana worked well enough for them on the Commodore 64, where golden oldies imported direct from the States offered good value for money, but of course in converting most lost their original qualities on the Spectrum and proved to be no more than low-value games like so many other budget products of the period.

Still, Firebird scored a budget Smash, *Rebel Star*, with Sean Masterson in Frontline, and a full-price one with *Heartland*. This arcade adventure was programmed by Odin, who had ceased marketing their own product to become Telecomsoft developers . . . the absorption of independents by larger software houses continued. The Edge had a hit on their hands as the *Marble Madness* clone *Bobby Bearing* found CRASH favour; and so did Palace with the follow-up *Cauldron II*, successful because though it was a sequel in name, in gameplay it was entirely different from the first *Cauldron*, a very polished platform game. Hewson brought out *Pyracurse*, an isometrically 3-D scrolling adventure in the mould of *Dragontorc*, but the peculiar problems it presented made it special.

Our peculiar problems were about to start – school holidays and nowhere to seat anyone . . .

A NEWSFIELD PUBLICATION
No.32
SEPTEMBER 1986 £1

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE

HELP
DAN
DEFEAT
THE MEKON
AND
SAVE
EARTH!

I WILL DESTROY YOUR PUNY EARTH, DARE!

DAN AND DIGBY IN ANASTASIA APPROACH THE ASTEROID...

WE MUST STOP THE GREEN HORROR BEFORE THE ASTEROID COLLIDES WITH US!

SPECTRUM
MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW
SEVEN PAGES OF PCW SHOW
PREVIEWS
A CLOSE LOOK AT WHAT'S UP AND COMING IN THE SPECTRUM GAMES WORLD
FREE INSIDE!
GIANT MANDRAGORE MAP POSTER

WILL DAN THWART THE MEKON'S PLAN TO DOMINATE THE CIVILISED UNIVERSE?

© IPC/DAN DARE LTD. 1986

Of all the covers in 1986, Oliver most looked forward to doing September's. He had been an avid Dan Dare/ Eagle fan as a boy, admired Frank Hampson (Dare's creator) and Frank Bellamy, who both had drawn some of the original strips, and finally got to draw Dan Dare himself when Eagle was relaunched in the Eighties. But Oliver never rated the relaunched Eagle, so the notion of recreating an original Fifties-style Eagle front page for Virgin's acclaimed Dan Dare was close to his heart – as was having a comic as a CRASH cover.

The long-running Genesis – Birth Of A Game competition had reached midway point by September's issue. The judges, Domark and Design Design, had finally whittled the enormous amount of entries down to John Eggleton and *Kat Trap*. The rest of the series would now deal with the programming, packaging and marketing.

Programming, packaging and marketing was a problem Beyond were just about to walk headlong into as the company blithely announced to John Minson exciting plans for the official *Star Trek* game, little knowing that production of the game would take almost as long as a voyages of the starship *Enterprise*. Minson had another laugh up his sleeve: Gary Liddon and Andrew Wright had managed to crash their company car a week after getting it. The accident took place in a Manchester one-way street (they were going the wrong way, of course) and the car belonged to Thalamus. Yes, Newsfield had taken the plunge and created its own software house.

Thalamus really started at the July Commodore Show when a young man from Finland introduced himself in halting English as Stavros Fasoulas and showed Roger Kean a Commodore 64 game called *Rainbow Warrior*. Roger was so impressed with it that he persuaded the other directors to start a label and market the game. Stavros signed up, Gary Liddon was moved from Newsfield's magazines to look after programming technicalities, and Andrew Wright of Activision was appointed to head Thalamus (a name which he and Gary Liddon devised). *Rainbow Warrior* changed name to *Sanxion* and the rest, as they say, would be history – at least for the 64. Thalamus has yet to produce a Spectrum game.

Tie-in time looked pretty good for a change. Virgin's *Dan Dare* proved to be addictive, playable and quite original. It was also clever of them to make the game different on each of the main 8-bit machines, avoiding the inevitable, and often invidious, comparisons. Going from one Dan to another, Mirrorsoft repeated a success with *Dynamite Dan II*, improving elements of the original to make an entirely new game. Mikro-Gen just missed a Smash by a hair's breadth with *Stainless Steel*, a shoot-'em-up based loosely on Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* character as re-envisaged by *2000AD*, while CRL found themselves in Derek Brewster's good books with Fergus McNeill's lampoon *The Boggit*. Incidentally, *The Hobbit* was still at Number 7 in the CRASH Charts!

Another near-Smash was *ACE*, one of the best flight simulations on the Spectrum at the time, and it came from Cascade – one of the earliest Spectrum houses, but usually known for their classified ads for cheap compilations.

Upstairs was beginning to resemble the moment before the Great Flood, when the ark was incomplete and rain threatened. The administrative move to Gravel Hill was held up by decorating, but the new LM team was getting busy writing and designing a dummy of the magazine to be presented to potential advertisers at a launch party set for mid-September. To add to the problems, the art department needed more people to cope with a fourth magazine. The solution seemed to be to move Matthew Uffindell and his huge light table down a floor, but only once the administrative people and LM had moved off to Gravel Hill. Somehow we packed the animals in two by two – and it rained chaos.

CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

CRASH SHOOTS RIGHT TO THE TOP!

We've Done the Ton!

Over 100,000 copies sold monthly

SPECTRUM PLUS 2

A First Look

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

PROGRAMMER PROFILES GALORE

FULL PCW SHOW REPORT

I. CRAIG

SCOOBY DOO and KNIGHT RIDER

Worth the wait?

October's cover marked a departure from the previous 32 covers; for the first time in the CRASH history it was painted by a hand other than Oliver Frey's, that of Ian Craig. It was not designed with any particular game in mind, but did have a passing resemblance to (and was a visual pun on) Oliver's very first CRASH cover. For the savage face, Ian used a photograph of a friend, though the pointed ears and sharp fangs were invented. As Oliver does with many pictures, Ian used an airbrush and then overpainted with an ordinary brush.

Early in September most of the editorial and mail-order staff decamped to London's Olympia for the ninth *PCW* Show. It was the year of the infamous sticker campaign, when *C&VG* plastered the Newsfield stand with Melissa Ravenflame adhesive labels, and Newsfield retaliated with some Hannah Smith stickers printed at the last moment. At one point, *Commodore User* editor Eugene Lacy returned to the EMAP stand's office and could no longer find the door – Mike Dunn and Ben Stone had hidden it under literally hundreds of stickers.

It was also the moment when Gargoyle Games underwent a metamorphosis and became Faster Than Light. Apart from the excitement of their own two games, *Lightforce* and *Shockway Rider*, they had a hit on their hands for Elite with the much-delayed *Scooby Doo*. Elite were riding high: after a disappointing Commodore 64 conversion of the coin-op *Paper Boy*, it only just missed a CRASH Smash on the Spectrum, though the Capcom conversion *1941* did far less well. Domark followed up the puzzles of *Splitting Images* with the official version of *Trivial Pursuit*. Despite the many trivia clones already out, the qualities of Domark's version shone out, and it too received a Smash. We also thought highly of Costa Panayi's *Revolution*, a 3-D puzzle-solving game which earned Vortex yet another in their long line of Smashes.

The biggest disappointment, though hardly a surprise, came with Ocean's ludicrously delayed *Knight Rider*. Rumours from within Ocean's offices had said it was a poor effort, and it was.

Internally there were some sweeping changes. The new offices opened, admin moved out, film planning moved down, LM moved across for two weeks from its small room into what had been advertising before finally departing to Gravel Hill, CRASH moved upstairs to where LM had been and Cameron Pound's photographic empire gained the room CRASH had just vacated. It was a bit like playing *Splitting Images*.

Graeme Kidd waved a goodbye of sorts. At the very end of August, shortly after CRASH's new Staff Writer Tony Flanagan had decided to leave, Graeme himself resigned over administrative problems. It was a difficult moment, with CRASH short-staffed and LM starting up, so Graeme was offered a new job as Publishing Executive in overall charge of the three computer magazines – which he accepted. However, he would remain titular editor of CRASH for a while yet. Meanwhile, Roger Kean had finally relinquished the editorship of ZZAP! to Gary Penn, and moved with the rest of LM to their new home in Gravel Hill. It was a busy month.

And on top of that came news from the Audit Bureau Of Circulations that CRASH was still the biggest-selling computer title in Britain, outstripping all others at over 100,000 copies a month. Roger Kean recalled a meeting in April 1984 with several top people from the old Imagine in Liverpool, when someone prophetically told him that CRASH was so different that it was bound to sell over 100,000 a month soon. He had been pleased, but seriously doubted CRASH would ever reach those sorts of figures. Doing better than 50,000 would have been a thrill for us in those early months.

At about the moment the October edition reached the printers, LM was officially launched at a big party in London, where the dummy was introduced to potential advertisers and Roger Kean made a speech he had rehearsed for days. I hate parties, I didn't go.

CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

164 ACTION PACKED PAGES!

LIGHTFORCE
ARCADE ACTION FROM FTL

THE GENESIS PROJECT

KAT TRAP –
The Preview

HEWSON HIGHLIGHTS
A Peek at URIDIUM,
CITY SLICKER
and FIRELORD . . .

A WELL-MATURED CHEESE . . .
DON PRIESTLEY tells all

STREETHAWK MOTORS IN
Will it take you for a ride?

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

WIN! WIN! WIN!
ASTERIX books and games,
DAN DARE goodies, Signed
copies of UCHI MATA
and lots more!

**WHEN IT MOVES,
WE PREVIEW IT**
The Run Up to Christmas
has BEGUN!

For me this is probably the least interesting CRASH cover, and certainly a disappointment from Ian Craig after the previous month's. The dynamics work well enough but the definition of both craft and explosion is poor; it is hard to see where you are or what is happening. The illustration, of course, relates to FTL's game Lightforce.

With the departure of Tony Flanagan there was another shuffle as Lee Paddon moved over from AMTIX! to CRASH. Lee had joined Newsfield some months earlier from the magazine *Your Computer* to act as the AMTIX! Software Editor – not that there was a lot of good software to be concerned about. We seemed to have moved into that strange post-*PCW* Show period when there ought to be lots of games released but software houses are still fighting to get their product completed.

Gargoyle Games's new FTL label kicked off well, however, with *Lightforce*, bemusing everyone with the fact that it was a hard and fast shoot-'em-up in the *Xevious* vein rather than a complex scrolling graphic adventure. 'A chance,' said the Smash review, for 'mainstream arcade entertainment,' unfortunately forgetting that that was exactly how Gargoyle Games had started out three years earlier, with the 3-D shoot-'em-up *Ad Astra*. And *Lightforce*'s graphics strongly resembled *Ad Astra*.

Quicksilva's *Glider Rider* was an odd case; the 48K version of this 3-D forced-perspective road game got 80%, but the 128K version soared to 92%. The real difference seemed to be the sound. And sound was only one of the problems faced by Digital Integration's *TT Racer*. It lost favour for being too much of a simulation and being too difficult to play.

But there were two more Smashes. *Napoleon At War* from CCS excited Sean Masterson, and the game with the silliest name ever – *Fat Worm Blows A Sparky* – earned Durell some extravagant praise for the 'stunningly original' solid 3-D graphics and its wormy animation.

There were enough disappointments for several issues, mostly in the budget range, where there was hardly anything of quality (apart from a few games on Mastertronic's M.A.D. label). Following on from the previous month's release of *Knight Rider* came another Ocean game 18 months late – *Street Hawk*. Again the difficulties of developing the game shone through, though it did slightly better with 68%. Another tie-in proved a letdown: *Asterix And The Magic Cauldron* from Melbourne House. Heavily pushed as their big Christmas game, it was so bug-ridden that playability was irrelevant. The big arcade conversion was *Dragon's Lair*, but Software Projects's problem in reproducing anything of the original's video-disk graphics – largely regarded as the only really interesting element of the arcade machine – let it down dismally on the Spectrum.

Gremlin Graphics fared far better with their Spectrum version of the Commodore 64 hit *Trailblazer* and it was a creditable and addictive game which just missed being a Smash at 88%.

We featured an interview with programmer Don Priestley, a man with possibly the longest Spectrum track record; but from a historical point of view it was the interviewer rather than the interviewee who was noteworthy. Bill Scolding had been the editor of *Sinclair User* and taken that magazine from a strong position to the leading place till CRASH overtook its sales. Bill never seemed to have borne CRASH any hard feelings over the previous year's verbal war – so when he resigned from *Sinclair User* earlier in 1986 he had come to Ludlow to help out for a few weeks with editorial, leading to his ex-colleagues ringing him at home with a cheery 'Morning Judas'. Sticks and stones etc . . .

CRASH

MICRO GAMES

164 ACTION-PACKED PAGES!

COBRA
YOU ARE
THE CURE

THE
GREAT
ESCAPE
Ocean's mega smash

HANNAH'S GREAT TIPS
GLIDER RIDER and
LIGHTFORCE mapped

DESIGNER PROGRAMMING
DAN MALONE tells all

A PROFUSION
OF REVIEWS
We look at a host
of unfinished games

SPECTRUM

MONTHLY SPECTRUM SOFTWARE REVIEW

WIN! WIN! WIN!
A COMPACT DISK and
copies of ACADEMY,
a tour of London
with CITY
SLICKER

GUARANTEED
100% PURE
No film stills, or screen shots
from other computers

As if to make up for the November issue, December's provided seven Smashes. Denton Designs struck back after some indeterminate games with *The Great Escape* for Ocean, displaying yet another form of isometric perspective to describe the World War II POW castle from which the player hoped to escape. And Hewson must have been pleased; Steve Crow, with three previous Smashes for other software houses to his name, programmed his fourth for them. *Firelord* was a game of chivalry set to Steve's characteristically attractive graphics. Then there was the risky conversion of Andrew Braybrook's monster Commodore 64 hit *Uridium*. The risk paid off – much credit to Dominic Robinson, who recreated the original fast-scrolling bas-relief graphics very well.

Durell clocked up another Smash with their dragon story *Thanatos*, and Mosaic's adaptation of a Dick Francis novel gave Derek a pre-Christmas treat in the Adventure Trail. Ocean hit big film tie-in time when *Cobra* – cynically expected to be a terrible disaster – turned out to be a fast, addictive and playable winner.

One of the year's big coin-op successes had been *Gauntlet*, an obvious case for conversion. US Gold had the official rights, but clones were a-cloning and it was a close race between Firebird, who got a Smash for *Druid*, and Electric Dreams, who just didn't for *Dandy*. But what was interesting was *Dandy*'s claim to originality, for the coin-op *Gauntlet* was a conversion of the original Atari game called *Dandy* written by student John Palevich!

There were some close misses, too; Palace's *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad*, for example. But if Ocean's tie-in gamble with big *Cobra* had paid off, US Gold's big gamble with *The Goonies* did not – it was a dispiriting mishmash of a game.

December was also notable for the first time budget-game reviews were grouped together; this 'budget ghetto' had (and has since) often been considered for CRASH, but rarely repeated.

Kat Trap was coming along well, and after the previous month's preview December's issue included an article about how Oliver was painting the game's packaging – and the ad appeared too, though it wasn't included in Bill Scolding's wry look at software advertising, a funny article which reviewed some recent ads and rated them in traditional CRASH style.
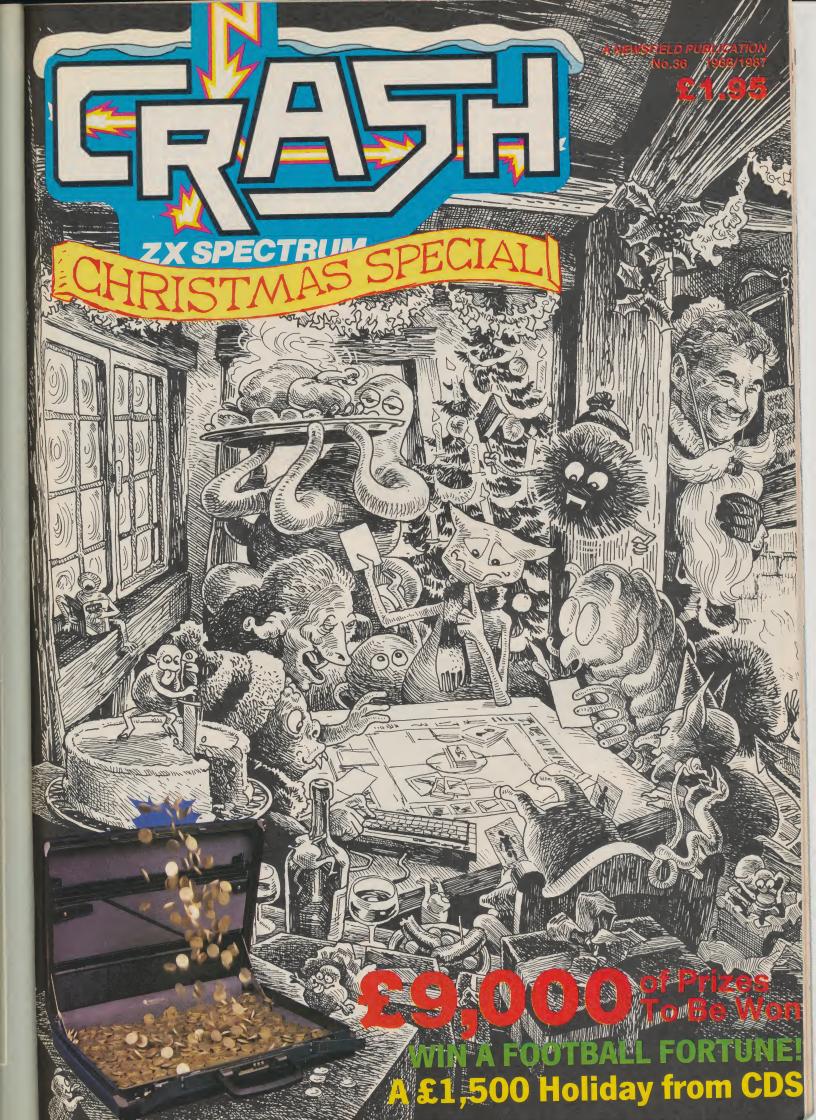
The first issue (Issue Zero) of LM was almost ready for printing; to reach as many readers as possible, it was to be included free in the Christmas Specials of CRASH, ZZAP! and AMTIX! rather than go on the newsagents' shelves on its own. Up in the art department life was frenzied, as they would soon be working on four magazines simultaneously. Still, two new paste-up artists appeared to help out: Sebastian Clare and Tim Croton. Sebastian's father had once owned a company called Small School Software, whose premises had been the first floor of the King Street Offices before CRASH editorial moved down there late in 1984 . . . circles within circles.

And there were two other new staff members; in film planning Newsfield took on Nick Orchard, a school-leaver, for Matthew Uffindell to train as a colour film planner (he was bearing in mind the extra work involved on the all-colour LM). And downstairs in the photographic department, Cameron Pound received some help from Michael Parkinson, a YTS trainee from nearby Tenbury Wells.

Newsfield's first office Christmas do, held at a restaurant outside Ludlow, had been for ten people. The second had been for 40 (staff and family) and was held at the Bull Inn (home of the fictitious Old Flatulence Bitter). This year's was to be for some 64 staff and many invitees – we were getting bigger . . .

CRASH

ZX SPECTRUM

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

£9,000 of Prizes To Be Won

WIN A FOOTBALL FORTUNE!

A £1,500 Holiday from CDS

CRASH readers got their first chance to see Newsfield's biggest gamble to date with a free 80-page issue of LM. There was also an article inside CRASH showing a picture of the LM editorial team taken at the London office (LM had two offices!). I wasn't present, which was just as well, because the picture was very dark. A staggering 296,000 copies of LM Issue Zero were printed, and the investment then, and in later months, would very nearly cripple the company.

Where to hold the Christmas 'do' was settled by booking Ludlow's biggest disco (out of two), the Starline Club. In the event, some 150 people turned up, some software houses travelling right across the country to be there. It pleased us a lot that they made the effort.

Yet another new face turned up in the art department, that of Markie Kendrick, who applied for the job because he knew the magazines and had once even drawn a Sabreman cartoon strip. Markie was a good find, quick at layout and fast on the draw – it was his comic inventiveness that led to King Grub in LM (and later in CRASH).

The games were less exciting, though Realtime gave us their very best Smash yet in *Starglider* – good on the 48K version, extraordinary on the 128K – for Rainbird, and Rainbird also received Derek's accolade for their *Jewels Of Darkness* compilation of Level 9's older adventures. But Derek was less than pleased with the 'Class Of '86' overall, thinking it a generally lacklustre year for adventures games.

Design Design had been busy; two for Piranha included the Smashed 3-D Dracula story *Nosferatu* and the less than Smashed *2000AD* licence *Rogue Trooper*; and then there was Domark's *Kat Trap*. At last the Genesis comp had given birth. It was a bit hard for the CRASH reviewers because they were all aware of the danger of bias, or at least being accused of it, so extra care was taken: however, *Kat Trap* still did well at 84%.

The remaining Smashes went to CRL for Pete Cooke's stunning follow-up to *Tau Ceti*, *Academy*, and to veterans Microsphere for their brilliant detective arcade adventure *Contact Sam Cruise*.

The big fun event for all the magazines was the Reviewers' Challenge, which starred Gary Penn and Julian Rignall representing ZZAP!, Richard Eddy and Massimo Valducci representing AMTIX! and Ben Stone and Mike 'Skippy' Dunn representing CRASH. Massimo was a young man from Shrewsbury who had been given a job earlier as a trainee subeditor, but had drifted into the role of AMTIX! reviewer. His Italian good looks made him popular with the female members of Newsfield staff, and their bets were on him to win. Everyone else's were on Julian Rignall as supposedly the company's ace arcadester, but in the event it was Ben Stone who won for CRASH . . . much to his surprise.

Just before the Christmas rush really began, the magazines got themselves a real live subeditor in mad Irishman Ciarán Brennan (a sub's job is to go through articles checking the spelling, grammar and sense of the piece, rewriting if necessary). During the early days much fun was made of typographical errors in CRASH (though they were as apparent in other magazines). Now there was no excuse . . .

ROBIN CANDY'S SCORES

IT'S finally arrived. The health inspectors have finally closed down Lloyd Mangram's notorious 𝕳all 𝕺f 𝕾lime, and here's ROBIN CANDY with **SCORES** — a monthly game-by-game list showing the whole range of scores on the very latest games (so *Jet Set Willy* record-breakers are out from the word go!).

Each month there'll be the top score so far received for each game — first under the game heading — and then a couple of others so you can measure yourself against not only interface-burners but ordinary mortals too.

And each month there'll be five winners picked at random (insofar as anything in the universe is truly 'random' — our every action affects the 'structure' of 'being' with a concatenation of 'cause', 'effect', 'cause', 'effect' which some are pleased to call 'coincidence') from all the entries received, regardless of whether they're printed or not.

The first entry drawn each month will win £40 of software of the winner's choice plus a CRASH cap and T-shirt, and four runners-up will receive CRASH caps and T-shirts too; so don't forget to tell us on the form what software and T-shirt you'd like if you do win.

Finally, the management apologise for the extremely confusing **SCORES** entry form in Issue 46, which was the result of that endless cosmic concatenation of 'cause', 'effect', 'cause', 'effect' we call 'technical reasons'.

Now read on . . .

BATTY
Elite
Simon Auger, Canvey Island, Essex — 1654075
Tommy Green, Mitcham — 51180
Andrew Mcmurdo, Ashington, Northumberland — 117350

BOMBJACK
Elite
Jonathan Ridehalgh, Markfield — 625950
Paul Morris, Southport — 203790
Jason Guest, Dudley — 500290

BUBBLE BOBBLE
Firebird
Jake Flewin, London NW — 1500000
Paul Reeves, Bournemouth — 587000
Daniel Goulden, Reading — 211000

DEATH WISH 3
Gremlin Graphics
Tommy Green, Mitcham — 187000
Dawn Mells, Sidcup — 99730
S D King, Wincanton — 48905
Paul Morris, Southport — 117300

ENDURO RACER
Activision
Philip Rees, Chipping Norton — 2224458
Stuart Whapples, Harrogate — 1795068
Sam Spundlow, Worksop — 21100

EXOLON
Hewson
Paul Tinsley, Pill — 943200
Ian Reid, Reigate — 55470
Michael Turner, Stoke Gabriel, Devon — 558100

FREDDY HARDEST
Ocean
Derek Henny, Fife — 568200
Paul Calvert, Peterlee, Durham — 153400

GAUNTLET
US Gold
Miguel Nunes, Torquay — 12497494
Paul Morris, Southport — 101990
David Port, Liversedge, West Yorkshire — 936822

RENEGADE
Ocean
Niall Lecoustre, Preston — 1111187
Daniel Mattsson, Bornholm, Denmark — 45960
Iain Rigby, Blackburn — 139250

WIZBALL
Ocean
Paul Rooks, Washington — 238920
Alan Mcgroajy, Doune, Perthshire — 12480
Nicholas Tellis, Harrow — 8320

ZYNAPS
Hewson
David Fort, Liversedge — 163725
Dave Mortimer, Bristol — 87950
Michael Wright, Walsall — 41900
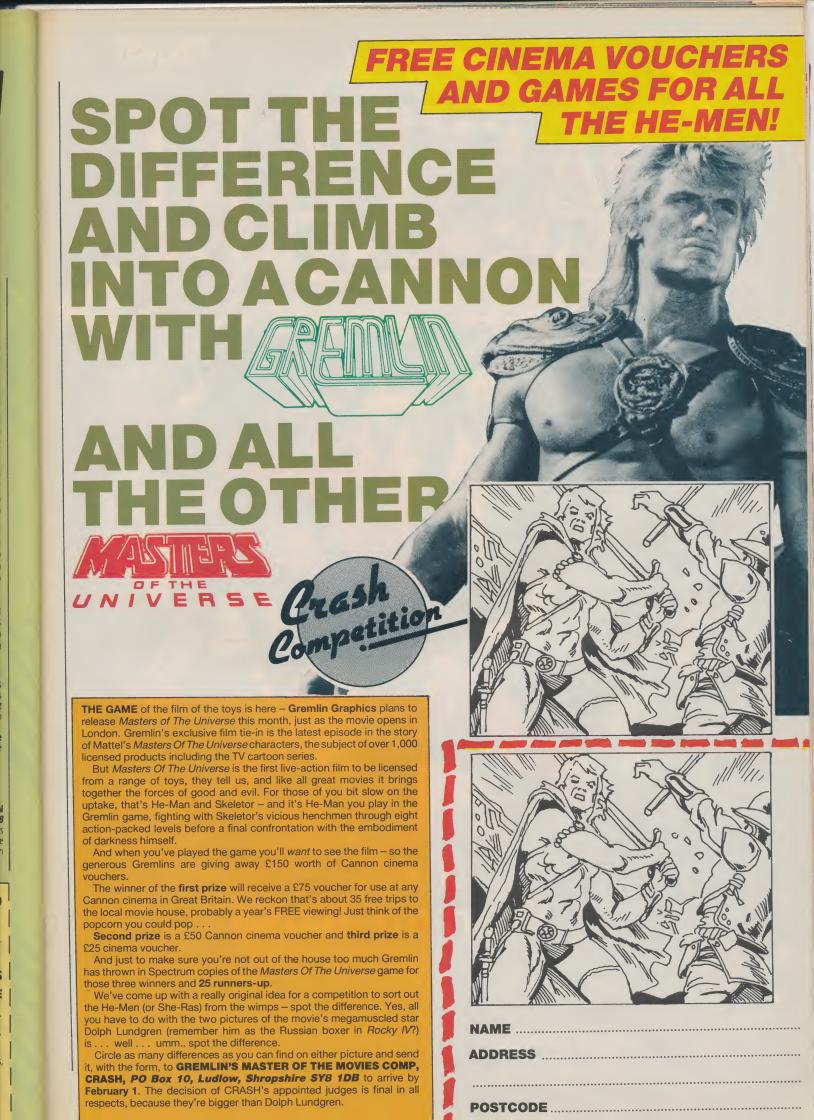
WINNERS
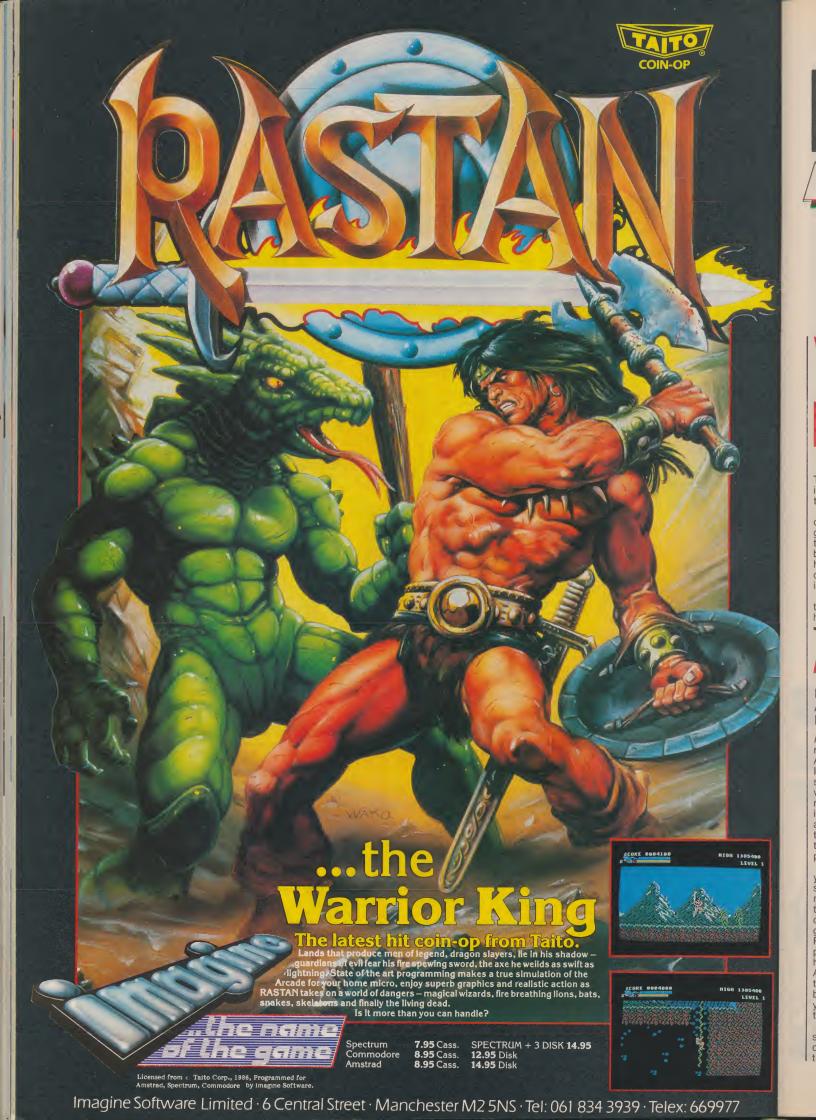
Michael Wright of Walsall was first out of the boastful horse's mouth this month — he wins £40 worth of software (including *Mercenary*, *Elite* and, as a break from all those high-score challenges, Rainbird's *Advanced OCP Art Studio*!) plus, of course, a CRASH cap and T-shirt. We're looking forward to his On The Screen entries . . .
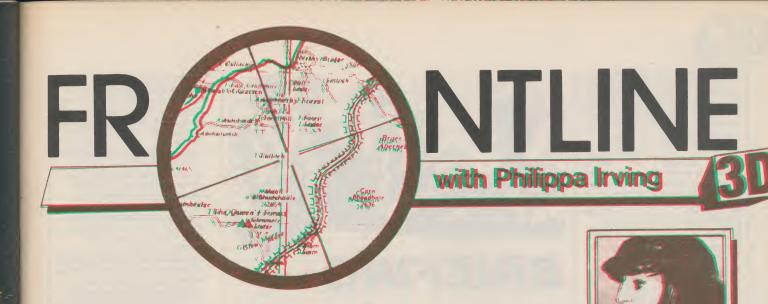
Runners-up, each getting a CRASH cap and T-shirt, are **Wayne Binnie** of Coventry, **Chris Jenkins** of Glasgow, **Stuart Whapples** of Harrogate and **Miguel Nunes** of Torquay.

Remember — *any* score sent in to **SCORES** can win you a prize.

SEND ME YOUR SCORES

Send this form (or a copy) with your scores for up to three games to **ROBIN CANDY'S SCORES, CRASH, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB**. Only genuine scores will be accepted; any improbably huge scores (68715290 in *Exolon*, ha!) will be immediately binned and the sender will be forced to listen to The Art Of Noise — a fate worse than sharing a desk with Lloyd Mangram.

FR⊙NTLINE

WARGAMES NEED REVITALISING

TO MY GREAT REL!EF things have picked up again this month; which is just as well, for I was beginning to fear for the future of wargaming on the Spectrum. And for my job!

The wargame world concentrates heavily on World War II scenarios. I don't have statistics to hand, but it seems that in the last year most of the games which have relied on traditional troop-moving have concerned the years 1939-1945. Many of the public prefer games based on familiar battles (especially those in the last war) because they are still very recent history; film critic Barry Norman has commented that Nazis make perfect cinematic villains. The imagination is excited by the kind of baddie whose image is still part of everyday life, but who is no longer a threat.

Practical considerations are also an important factor: designers can take advantage of the many diaries and memoirs of the last war which have been published, and photographs are abundant.

However, there many people, myself included, who would like to see wars from the much more distant past, and imaginary wars, treated in the same way. If reliable historical information is lacking, then surely a resourceful designer could make it up. Games based on events many centuries ago could be just as realistic as those of World War II.

What about a game, with a series of scenarios and a campaign, about some of the wars fought by the Israelites in the Old Testament? Or Hannibal's invasion of Italy? Another possibility is Boadicea's uprising. I'm not a programmer and I'm not a military historian, but I can think of half a dozen ideas off the top of my head.

The Spectrum's memory does have limitations, which do affect the way strategies are devised. However, a bit of imagination and innovation would revitalise things.

HIGH FRONTIER

PRODUCER: Activision
AUTHOR: Alan Steel
PRICE: £9.99

High Frontier is most unusual; it's not entirely hypothetical, as the Americans' Strategic Defence Initiative (the so-called Star Wars system, with space-based laser weapons set up to destroy nuclear missiles which attack the States) is going to become a reality. Nearly all wargames are either based on the past or are purely hypothetical; this one is on the frontier of the present and the future.

Another unusual aspect is that you are not only defending a superpower – you're conducting a major research project at the same time. The objective is to construct one or more satellite systems and get them into orbit before a Russian bombardment takes place; success is measured by how few missiles get through to American soil. So even if your teachers couldn't see you becoming an aerospace engineer, you now have the chance to prove them wrong.

High Frontier is presented in a series of highly symbolic icon-driven screens, and it is essential to use the 26-page manual to

interpret the screens. The first stage in playing the game is to decide how many missiles the USSR starts off with, and whether the presidents of the USA and the USSR are warlike 'hawks', peacemongering 'doves' or middle-of-the-road realists.

Having made your choices, you have to develop and assemble your defence systems, keeping a watchful eye on the clock (because an attack is coming) and on expenditure (because the money for the project has to come from somewhere). There are six defence systems available, though it's unlikely you'll have the time or funds to get all six operational before being attacked. So the player must allocate funds and manpower to the projects of his choice, and each stage of each project requires a particular level of funding and manning.

Your requirements vary from stage to stage, and are never predictable, which adds to the strange addictiveness. Some of the research turns out to be fruitless, but once you manage to produce satellites, you can launch them.

True to life, some of the launches are flops. And even when

the satellites are in space, they can be a millstone round your neck, as payments must be kept up. Failure to pay off all the development costs will result in bits falling off them.
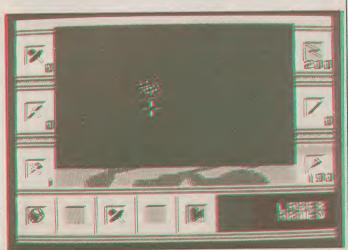
The author has made sure that the Presidential telephone icon cannot be ignored. Throughout the game, the President contacts the player, usually to ask for progress reports. Since the President controls the purse strings, anything you tell him

should be calculated to get him to release more money for research. Thus this section becomes a cynical exercise in telling him only what he ought to be told!

Sooner or later, the real excitement begins. It's all over very quickly, and the program will assess the performance of each defence system. It may be a postmortem.

High Frontier is beautifully produced to what might be called arcade standards, and makes a

▶ Activision's *High Frontier*: developing space-age defence for an inevitable war

neat and self-contained game with a fairly short time limit. My only complaint is that there's little to it, though it's enjoyable to play while it lasts. But it's certainly well put together, and the manual is interesting in itself.

Presentation   **90%**
Extremely polished; and it's easy to control despite the apparent complexity of the icon system

Graphics   **87%**
Both attractive and functional

Rules   **79%**
Substantial, though it's difficult to find things

Authenticity   **75%**
It's difficult to judge the authenticity of a simulation of something which doesn't exist – but the final stage generates atmosphere

Playability   **81%**
Funding and manning scientific research has never been more fun!

OVERALL   **71%**
High Frontier offers enjoyment, but not lasting interest

BRIEFING

Legions Of Death

There aren't many tips for Lothlorien's Punic Wars naval simulation (84% Overall in Issue 37) – because it's 'so excruciatingly easy', says **Ed Sykes** of Winchester, who sent

these in . . .

1 Put victory conditions to maximum
2 Build ten quinqueremes as well-equipped as possible (ie marines, archers, corrus). Don't buy sails or a tower.
3 Place four in Carthage, the other

six around Sicily
4 Collect gold and deposit it in Carthage, attacking any Roman ships that get in the way (always have at least two ships together, or they'll be picked off by the Romans)
5 Carry on till a) the Roman fleet destroys itself by continually attacking you, or b) you have enough gold to buy ships in order to finish them off
6 **The map**
All the map features have their own code between 0 and 255. The map itself is from 50000 to 54000. Code 0 represents nothing on the map so the airlock doors etc can be removed by POKEing the location of the feature with 0.
The memory area 54001 to about 60000 contains the graphics for the features, men and droids. By experimenting you can change the graphics.
The graphic characters are all 32 bytes long and are stored as data in 4 blocks of 8 bytes each. The characters are like four user-definable characters together, stored like so:

PEGASUS BRIDGE

Producer: **PSS**
Price:**£12.95**

June 5 1944 was the night of action: after a year of secret planning, the British Sixth Airborne Division landed in Nazi-occupied Normandy.

What makes a game based on this operation interesting is that the objectives of capturing and bombing bridges – or defending them – are more important than killing large numbers of enemies, and so the gameplay feels more realistic than usual.

The player is given a choice of sides to play against the computer, which always makes a game more satisfying, and there is a two-player option.

At the beginning of *Pegasus Bridge*, the British have not yet made their parachute drops and so there are no British units on the map. The German forces are distributed around various rather remote corners, with only a handful of men already positioned near the all-important bridges.

Maps and other information are provided in the booklet and on the screen. The booklet assumes you have a detailed geographical knowledge of the area, which makes things frustrating; as with most computer-wargame maps, what appears on the screen is barely recognisable as landscape.

There are ten different types of terrain, which affect the movement of the troops and the defensibility of particular areas. The Sixth Airborne Division and German forces are both divided into many battalions, with the characteristics of each listed in the booklet.

If you take the German side, your objective is to keep as many key positions as possible till the end of the 36-turn game. But I took the British side, and will describe *Pegasus Bridge* from that perspective.

The game begins when you give the Sixth Airborne Division clearance to start out for Normandy, though the number of aircraft is not enough for a rapid invasion. The Germans are alerted and hurry to defend the territory they occupied four years earlier.

When controlling the British side, the first thing the player has to do is decide where each unit is going to parachute (later some ground units arrive at positions preset by the program). Landing on open ground is recommended, since landing in towns or woods will divide the unit and make it less effective. But the wind makes things difficult.

Having set enough troops on French soil, the British player's task is to capture and hold the river and canal bridges in Caen, to destroy or occupy the five crossings of the river Dives, and to occupy the Merville Battery area.

Movement follows in a straightforward fashion: units, each represented on the screen by very small squares like minute postage stamps, can be stacked and moved together at the speed of the slowest unit in the stack.

Yet it's annoyingly difficult to control the cursor using the keyboard, and great care has to be taken in selecting units and then trying not to overshoot their destination.

Combat operates on similar principles, with strength and weaponry affecting the outcome.

After engaging in combat and capturing a bridge, a British unit can, if it has the means, blow it up. (It's stating the obvious to say that the unit must be removed from the bridge first!) The bridges over the Caen canal and Orne river should be preserved to meet the victory conditions, though.

The booklet is well-written and full of detail, including a description of the course of the actual battle and that useful section called

'author's notes' in which the game's designer defends its idiosyncrasies and points out its more obscure merits.

With matter-of-fact modesty the author comments that the computer opponent is 'neither particularly clever, nor particularly stupid', and points out the precariousness and daring uncertainty of the original operation.

And *Pegasus Bridge* reflects that rather well. This is a solidly-designed game with an interesting scenario closely based on history and plenty of play in it.

Presentation   **70%**
Annoying key action comes close to ruining the playability

Graphics   **81%**
Attractive, though the unit counters are too small

Rules   **89%**
Excellent – a thorough description of play and the historical background

Authenticity   **80%**
Clearly based closely on the historical situation, but unatmospheric

Playability   **70%**
Limited by the difficulties of cursor-control

OVERALL   **78%**
An interesting challenge and a good game

UDG 1 UDG 2
UDG 2 UDG 3

The names for the map features and men are stored at about 38000 as phrases of single letters.

So it's not too difficult to change the map, object, graphics and names.

But moving the computer and defence lasers is more difficult as the new coordinates must be entered elsewhere in the program.

Rebelstar Raiders

All these POKEs for Firebird's classic *Rebelstar Raiders* (from **Chris Davis** of Ludlow!) except the last can be used in both one-player and two-player versions. The first set removes all the sliding doors . . .

50375,0	50391,0	50616,0
50701,0	50758,0	50776,0
51015,0	51031,0	51074,0
51082,0	51167,0	51176,0
51186,0	51273,0	51323,0
51331,0	51470,0	51489,0
51494,0	51512,0	51629,0
51647,0	51656,0	51715,0
51753,0	51798,0	51819,0
51992,0	52233,0	52306,0
52310,0	52383,0	52456,0
52613,0	52713,0	53193,0
53343,0	53508,0	

These POKEs destroy all the airlock doors:

50565,0	50569,0
50645,0	50649,0
50725,0	50729,0
52243,0	52250,0

52323,0	52330,0
52403,0	52410,0
52483,0	52490,0
52563,0	52570,0
53370,0	53372,0
52856,0	53016,0

And these POKEs destroy all the security doors:

50603,0	50608,0
50764,0	51008,0
51560,0	51721,0
52681,0	

Now you should have no trouble getting into the place, at least. To enter the following POKEs, which are helpful for combat:

merge the header program
type 'STOP:' before the first RANDOMIZE USR statement
type 'RUN'
load the game as normal
enter the POKEs
type 'CONTINUE'

To make the combat droids 'indestructible:

FOR I=61263 TO 61294:
POKE I,0: NEXT I

To make the men indestructible (and the androids indestructible when in fire mode):

FOR I=60846 TO 60878:
POKE I,0: NEXT I

To destroy the three defence lasers:

POKE 53627,0
POKE 53646,0
POKE 53661,0

The next POKE only works on the two-player version of *Rebelstar Raiders*. It changes the action points needed to fire to zero for the rebels and the operatives.

POKE 26705,120

VULCAN

Colin Pratt of Weybridge has sent a victory-by-numbers formula for winning CCS's excellent *Vulcan* by November 20 as the Allies.

November 12: Travel Sixth Commando battalion and the Hart Force to Bizerta
14: Travel 78th Infantry division to just before the junction south of Bizerta
15: Travel First Parachute battalion to Tarberra
16: Travel First Parachute battalion and Blade Force to just before the junction south of Bizerta. Make suicide attack with Hart Force a few miles south. Fortify Sixth Commando battalion.
17: Move 78th Infantry division to Bizerta, avoiding the enemy units. Travel reinforcements for 78th Infantry to just before the junction south of Bizerta.
18: Travel 78th Infantry division to just north of Tunis
19: If the 78th has reached its destination, attack Tunis
20: Keep attacking Tunis with the 78th. Travel First US Armoured division to just before the junction south of Bizerta.

This should be enough to take Tunis and win the war. If it isn't, congregate the French and British armour and American infantry

west of Tunis and the British infantry and American armour to the north. Cut off Tunis with the American infantry and attack with the northern forces.

ANNALS OF ROME
(STAY POPULAR!)

PSS's *Annals Of Rome* is more of a collection of bugs than a game, as **W Errington** of Sheffield testifies, but it's curiously absorbing all the same. He advocates building up an empire gradually; when you've captured one province, wait till the revolts die down before going on to the next. Once the empire has been established, civil war becomes the major threat. No matter how high a governor's loyalty, if you put him in charge of a large force before long it's a case of 'treachery in Aegyptus'.

A good way to improve low loyalty is to make your most aged, incompetent and disloyal senator the commander of the Roman garrison. Almost inevitably he will rebel and make himself dictator, and your popularity rating will be readjusted – with any luck, upward. If not, you can always repeat the operation! Finances are unimportant – only popularity matters.

NEXT MONTH

In Issue 49 Frontline: the debate on strategy morality continues, alongside reviews and a long Briefing. Send your letters and tips to: PHILIPPA IRVING, FRONTLINE, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*.

3D the crash CHARTS

TOP GAMES CHRISTMAS

The three charts compiled from the votes of CRASH readers is the most realistic chart for gauging the popularity of Spectrum games – it is the games that are being played that get the votes, not the games that are in the shops this week or month.

And the votes are important. It's up to you to let us know what you feel, so fill in the voting forms which live on the results pages and in FRONTLINE to make your voice heard.

If you don't want to carve up your issue of CRASH, we understand. Use a photocopy if you like, or copy the details from the voting forms onto a postcard, or the back of a sealed envelope, and send that to us instead.

Apart from the satisfaction of registering your vote, there's always the chance of winning a prize. Each month we draw 15 winners from all the voting forms received – five for the HOTLINE, five for the ADVENTURE and five for the STRATEGY chart.

A top prize of £40 worth of software (your choice, not ours) and a CRASH T-shirt is awarded to the first slip drawn from the HOTLINE votes, and another £40 of goodies and a shirt goes to the ADVENTURE and £20 of goodies and a shirt goes to the STRATEGY

Four runners up from each ballot box collect a CRASH T-shirt and a CRASH Hat. So get those votes in to the **CRASH HOTLINE CHART**, **CRASH ADVENTURE CHART** and **CRASH STRATEGY CHART**: *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.*

Not much has changed in the Strategy Top Ten – the voters are fighting a war of attrition. CCS's *Vulcan* STILL holds the Number One spot, and it's just three re-entries at the bottom of the chart – nothing new. Rumour has it that there are a few new strategy games out soon (indeed, Frontline reviews two this issue . . . page 135 . . .), so let's see them here!

Mathew Payne, *who strategically sent us a lovely James Dean postcard, gets £40 worth of software and a T-shirt via the quickest tank going in the direction of Gloucester. Caps and T-shirts will also be dispatched in a convoy of jeeps to* Robert Parker *of Mamble in Worcestershire (just up the road),* Peter Robinson *down in Margate,* Mark Davies *on the Trent in Stoke and, weather permitting,* Michael Pini *in Basildon, Essex.*

A Top 30 with a difference – Stephen Jaggard of Newmarket sent in this list of the all-time Top 30, based on every Hotline Chart in CRASH Issues 4-46 inclusive.

After the title and software house, it gives this information:
● the number of times the game's been in the chart
● the number of times it's been Number One (in brackets)
● the number of points it's earned on Stephen's system (30 for each time in first place, 29 for each time in second, etc).

We'll let you draw your own conclusions from the mountain of statistics – but it's ironic to see Jon Ritman's *Matchday*, the one we never Smashed and you never put at Number One, at the top! (Its sequel's Smashed this issue.)

Normal Hotline voting resumes now . . .

Strategy Top Ten

1	(1)	**VULCAN**	CCS
2	(3)	**DESERT RATS**	CCS
3	(2)	**ARNHEM**	CCS
4	(7)	**LORDS OF MIDNIGHT**	BEYOND
5	(5)	**REBELSTAR RAIDERS**	FIREBIRD
6	(4)	**THEATRE EUROPE**	PSS
7	(6)	**DOOMDARK'S REVENGE**	BEYOND
8	(-)	**BISMARCK**	PSS
9	(-)	**BATTLE OF BRITAIN**	PSS
10	(-)	**YANKEE**	CCS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

Hotline All-Time Top 30

#	Title	Label		
1	MATCHDAY	OCEAN	33 (0)	746
2	ELITE	FIREBIRD	22 (2)	567
3	COMMANDO	ELITE	20 (5)	468
4	LORDS OF MIDNIGHT	BEYOND	29 (0)	454
5	BOMBJACK	ELITE	16 (0)	381
6	PAPERBOY	ELITE	12 (2)	330
7	SABRE WULF	ULTIMATE	16 (6)	313
8	WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST	MELBOURNE HSE	17 (3)	311
9	KNIGHTLORE	ULTIMATE	14 (3)	304
10	ATIC ATAC	ULTIMATE	13 (0)	294
11	HYPERSPORTS	IMAGINE	16 (1)	293
12	MATCH POINT	PSION	19 (0)	289
13	GHOSTS N GOBLINS	ELITE	13 (3)	280
14	JET SET WILLY	SOFTWARE PROJECTS	12 (3)	279
15	QUAZATRON	HEWSON	14 (1)	277
16	BATMAN	OCEAN	16 (0)	271
17	DALEY THOMPSONS DECATHLON	OCEAN	16 (0)	271
18	GAUNTLET	US GOLD	9 (8)	267
19	DOOMDARK'S REVENGE	BEYOND	15 (0)	263
20	URIDIUM	HEWSON	11 (0)	260
21	MANIC MINER	BUG BYTE	13 (1)	258
22	COBRA	OCEAN	10 (0)	257
23	ALIEN 8	ULTIMATE	12 (1)	249
24	STARQUAKE	BUBBLE BUS	13 (0)	244
25	LUNAR JETMAN	ULTIMATE	10 (0)	232
26	UNDERWURLDE	ULTIMATE	11 (0)	221
27	SPY VS SPY	BEYOND	13 (0)	212
28	SPY HUNTER	US GOLD	10 (1)	209
29	SPELLBOUND	MASTERTRONIC	14 (0)	200
30	GREEN BERET	IMAGINE	10 (0)	198

Adventure Top 20

#	(prev)	Title	Label
1	(9)	STORMBRINGER	M.A.D.
2	(4)	SPELLBOUND	M.A.D.
3	(1)	THE HOBBIT	MELBOURNE HOUSE
4	(6)	DOOMDARK'S REVENGE	BEYOND
5	(2)	LORDS OF MIDNIGHT	BEYOND
6	(5)	HEAVY ON THE MAGICK	GARGOYLE GAMES
7	(7)	KNIGHT TYME	M.A.D.
8	(-)	KILLED UNTIL DEAD	US GOLD
9	(10)	LORD OF THE RINGS	MELBOURNE HOUSE
10	(3)	THE BOGGIT	CRL
11	(14)	RED MOON	LEVEL 9
12	(13)	THE BIG SLEAZE	PIRANHA
13	(-)	DRACULA	CRL
14	(11)	GREMLINS	ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
15	(18)	SHADOWS OF MORDOR	MELBOURNE HSE
16	(-)	THE PAWN	RAINBIRD
17	(8)	BORED OF THE RINGS	CRL
18	(12)	PRICE OF MAGIK	LEVEL 9
19	(-)	VERY BIG CAVE ADVENTURE	CRL
20	(20)	FAIRLIGHT 2	THE EDGE

Shock! Horror! *The Hobbit* gets knocked off the top position (must be the slippery weather conditions in Middle Earth). And the Christmas Number One is *Stormbringer*, the window-driven arcade adventure from ace programmer David Jones. He also holds the Number Two and Seven spots with more M.A.D. games – *Spellbound* and *Knight Tyme*. After hovering at the bottom of the chart in Issue 46 *Killed Until Dead* shoots in at Number Eight. Further down, *The Pawn* re-enters with CRL's *Dracula* and *Very Big Cave Adventure*.

Lucky old Philip King *from Clee Hill in Shropshire (which just happens to be just down the road . . . who picks the winners of these charts?) will get a nice present this Christmas – but besides that CRASH T-shirt he'll also get £40 worth of software, I'm assured. Games such as* Vulcan, Stifflip & Co. *and* The Sentinel *will be on their way via the next available local sheep. Cap-and-T-shirt-winning runners-up come from far places such as Sweden (like* Anders Dunkler), *Lichfield (like* J Mortlock) *Harrow (like Nicholas Tellis) and Lancashire (like* J Counsell).

CCS
CCS
CCS
OND
BIRD
PSS
OND
PSS
PSS
CCS

► REDIY3-D: two issues ago we tried to show you how to use the CRASH 3-D glasses supplied with Issue 46 for your own 3-D artwork, using this King Grub drawing as an example. Stupidly we missed out the two crosses on each picture which are essential to the operation, so all you got was King Grub embarrassed and King Grub seasick.

Here the pictures are again, complete with crosses, and here's what we said two months ago:

Place your paper over the RED drawing, but before tracing the image with your red crayon trace the two little crosses carefully. After completing the red drawing, move the paper over to exactly centre your two red crosses over the ones provided above and below the GREEN drawing. Now trace the green drawing, and then check the result through your CRASH spectacles.

(PS Remember you'll need crayons as close to the colours of the 3-D glasses' two lenses as possible. Test this by scribbling with a red crayon and looking at the scribble through the red lens – if you can hardly see it, you're getting close! The same principle applies to the green lens, of course. For more details on 3-D, the universe and everything, refer to Issue 46.)

BREAK IN A BOUNCING BALL FROM

CRL's got balls – but they're going to be minus one when you've finished with them, because a real live leather Tango Mundial football (as used in cup matches) plus 20 copies of CRL's *Ballbreaker* are up to bat in this word-square comp.

Ballbreaker's the imaginative 3-D extension of the *Breakout* genre which we reviewed a couple of issues back. It's one of the latest in CRL's varied range – this month they go to the opposite end of the market with *Jack The Ripper!* – and to shamelessly hype some of those past CRL successes we've devised a word square.
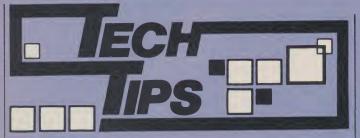
All you have to do to win the leather football and a copy of the game as **first prize** (or a copy of the game if you're one of **20 runners-up**) is find the titles of ten CRL games in the word square. To make it that little bit trickier, we've split up the two-word titles and one word has changed direction in the middle!

By the way, we didn't mean to have BUG, BUJJET and GAAC in the square – so no prizes for finding those computerish words. (If you did find 'em it would mean you couldn't spell, anyway.)

Put a line through each hidden word when you've found it, fill in the form and rush it all to **LET'S PLAY BALL WITH CRL COMP, CRASH, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB** to arrive by February 1. The decision of CRASH's judges is final in all respects – and who needs say more than that, really?

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POSTCODE ....

A	F	R	C	E	T	I	G	H	G
A	C	W	J	R	T	A	H	D	L
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K	U	J	J	E	T	C	M	C	Z
B	T	E	C	A	P	F	S	U	I
O	C	B	U	G	S	Y	T	L	G
G	A	A	C	L	J	D	E	A	J
G	S	L	G	R	U	G	R	X	J
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T									

Tech Tips

SIMON N GOODWIN brings exclusive news of a Spectrum superclone set to rival Amstrad's range – plus tips on 128 noise.

AMSTROLOGY

The future of the Spectrum – can a superclone challenge Amstrad?

IR CLIVE SINCLAIR'S Spectrum is now more than five years old. It is Britain's most successful computer design, and reputedly more than four million have been sold. The Spectrum has survived seven major design revisions and a change of ownership – Sinclair sold Amstrad all rights to the machine in April 1986 – but sales are falling and prices are not as competitive as they used to be.

Against this background it's certainly good news to hear of a SuperSpectrum from a new manufacturer. But will Amstrad put up a fight? The consumer-electronics giant has already tried to kill Sinclair QL clones like the Sandy Futura (now defunct) and the CST Thor (still in production).

Amstrad has made money cloning IBM computers, but is unlikely to take the view that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery if the market it's sewn up so cosily is invaded by a superior product.

This seems like a good time to consider the future of the Spectrum. Is Amstrad boss Alan Sugar flogging a dead horse? Is anyone buying it? Will the Spectrum be here in two years, or in ten? Will there still be new software for 8-bit machines such as the Spectrum?

AMSTRAD'S ACTIVITY

Alan Sugar says he intends to sell half a million Spectrum +3s. He has hinted that the +3 will not be the last Spectrum model, and it's easy to find evidence to back this up. The +3 is the first real Amstrad Spectrum – it's a mixture of Amstrad CPC and the Spectrum software and hardware.

Despite appearances, the +2 was little more than a Sinclair 128 with a built-in tape recorder and fins inside to stop the custom chips overheating. It's only been on the market for a little over a year, but I'm sure it will soon be replaced.

The +2 sold around a quarter of a million units in the first year – probably less than Amstrad expected, but still quite an encouraging number. That figure, plus an allowance for marketing hype, probably explains Alan Sugar's prediction of half a million +3 sales.

It's rumoured that Amstrad bought a million tacky SJS-01 joysticks for a dollar each, colour-matched to sell with the Plus Two. That may explain why grey sticks are still being sold with the new all-black Spectrum. At this rate, unless Alan Sugar can find something else to do with the nonstandard sticks, he'll have to keep the Spectrum in production at least till 1990 just to get shot of all those joysticks. Yuck!

NEW DIRECTION

The +3 represents a major redesign of the Spectrum. It has lots of extra features, but is much simpler than previous 128K versions. Older models retained compatibility with the first Spectrums by tacking extra parts around the edges of the basic design – Sinclair's 128 was almost two computers in one box. The +3 keeps the same functions, but the internal design is much altered.

Amstrad has done a reasonable job of preserving compatability with older models. It helps that

Amstrad's labs are now run by Richard Altwasser, who designed the original Spectrum for Uncle Clive in 1981. Altwasser was also responsible for the ZX-81 – the tiny computer that needed a carton of milk on the top to prevent it overheating. (Interestingly, extra holes were punched into the +3 power-supply box at a late stage, to stop it getting too hot.)

Several faults have already come to light in production versions of the +3. It seems some of the tweaks introduced in the last days of Sinclair's work on the Spectrum have not been properly understood by Amstrad's development team, and it may be a while till all the new quirks are known and can be conquered.

I've summarised the +3's unique bugs in a separate panel. The problems are not too serious – Spectrum-users and suppliers have got around similar faults in the past – but it's vital that the snags become well-known, so Amstrad can be encouraged to fix them and so that in the meantime existing users don't trip over them and lose confidence in the machine.

I'm sure my list is not exhaustive. If you find other incompatibilities, please write in and tell us about them.

+4?

The +3 manual and circuit board contain heavy hints that there will be a new version of the +2, with more Amstrad features and less of Sinclair's original design.

These technical clues suggest that the new machine will be a development of the +3, but it will work and look like a +2, with a cassette drive and a 64K RAM disk – 6K larger than that on the +3, but 10K smaller than on other 128s.

I base this theory on two things. Firstly, the operating system in the latest Spectrum, +3DOS, has been designed to work without a disk drive. Secondly, there are pads on the +3 circuit board that appear to be intended to supply power and signals to a cassette unit identical to the one in the +2.

Amstrad tends to build one circuit board for a range of computers; for instance, the PCW8256 contains the sockets and leads you need to turn it into an 8512. All you have to do is plug some extra parts in.

I doubt there'll be a dealer upgrade – or downgrade – to replace the disk drive in current +3s with a cassette unit, but it seems clear that Amstrad intends to use the same board, stripped of a few parts, for a tape-based computer.

Page 212 of the +3 manual contains a section headed 'using +3DOS without a floppy disk'. This explains that the ROM software, derived from Amstrad's earlier CPC range, can sense the absence of the disk drive and reconfigure itself accordingly. The RAM disk, drive M:, becomes the default drive and attempts to access the A: or B: drives give a 'drive not found' error.

I'm sure a cassette version of the +3 will be produced, though it's not clear whether Amstrad will sell it as a +2 or as a new model. What is more interesting is whether or not the Spectrum will continue to be developed after that.

Probably even Amstrad doesn't know that yet – it will depend upon sales of current models, and the activity of other manufacturers.

MARKET AMSTROLOGY

The first point to make is that the price of the Spectrum is deliberately inflated at the moment. Out of curiosity I recently asked a manufacturer to estimate the total component cost – including the disk, box, keyboard, manual and shipping - of a +3. After some research, he reckoned that Amstrad could bring +3s into the UK for between £50 and £60.

Chip prices are rising, and dealers and distributors must be allowed a slice of the cake, but Amstrad could surely make a healthy profit selling the +3 at £150 or even less. Most likely the price of the machine will fall slowly; Amstrad won't rush to cut the price while the machine is still selling.

At £199 the +3's only UK competitors are the Commodore 64 and Atari ST. The 64 is as old as the Spectrum, and is similarly well-supported by cheap software and add-ons. It has better graphics and sound, but less RAM and no built-in disk.

The Atari ST boasts more colours and RAM but – despite Jack Tramiel's marketing hype – it's every bit as much a lash-up as the +3. The ST is probably worth the extra £100 if you want to run serious programs, but 16-bit games software is still rare, expensive, and usually just a prettier variation on old 8-bit themes.

The +3 is aimed at the games-player or home user with a tight budget. The ST is aimed at the yuppie who can afford to buy a trendy £300 machine as a toy – it's a disposable computer.

Computers are much more similar than manufacturers would have us believe: they all blow clouds of coloured dots around a TV screen, and they all use similar parts to do the job.

The real advantage of the Spectrum – as Amstrad knew well when it bought out Sinclair and scrapped its own CPC range – is the vast range of cheap programs and add-ons already available for the machine, and the thousands of people who have made a living by learning about the Spectrum and selling their expertise.

Some products will disappear, and some people will move on to other machines, but the Sinclair support industry is so vast that it is sure to continue well into the Nineties. Some of the big firms may drop out, but few people will miss them.

We could see a return of the spirit of '82 and '83 with small firms dealing mainly by mail order; this may be bad news for window-shoppers, but could improve the quality and variety of new Spectrum software and encourage programmers to use the features of the 128. The extra RAM and ports have hardly been used yet; despite the 128K versions of some major games, big firms have stuck with 48K programs, lowest-common-denominator products that *every* Spectrum-owner can buy.

True 128K titles are rare now, but they're the way forward for the Spectrum. The +3's fast loading makes them practical.

OTHER MANUFACTURERS

There's no shortage of firms capable of building the Spectrum. It has been made, with varying degrees of licensing approval, in at least seven countries. It's possible those machines could surface in the UK, and there's also a good chance that we'll see 'Spectrum clones' – akin to copies of the IBM PC and Apple 2 – from new manufacturers.

Sinclair's first computers were made in Scotland, at the Timex plant in Dundee. This led to a deal with Timex in the US, which had sold vast numbers of ZX-81's under the name TMS-1000.

Timex obtained rights to the old Spectrum design, but added a sound chip, extra ROM and a new keyboard before launching the TMS-2068 in late 1983. This wasn't very compatible with the Spectrum, though it could have been made much more so with a little extra work. It flopped in the United States, but hundreds of thousands were sold recently to the Polish government.

A factory in Brazil is reportedly churning out rubber-keyed Spectrums for the Latin American market. As often happens in Brazil, Microdigital, the makers, started off building machines under licence and later decided to go it alone. And there's said to be a Russian Spectrum clone.

The Spectrum 128 was jointly developed by Sinclair and Indescomp, a state-funded Spanish manufacturer. Many of the features of the 128 came from the Timex 2068.

The Spectrum + was assembled by AB Electronics in South Wales and Samsung in South Korea – a firm that also built machines for Amstrad. The +2 and +3 are assembled in Taiwan.

In many ways the +3 is more a Spectrum clone than a true Sinclair Spectrum. What makes all the difference is that Amstrad owns the rights to the Spectrum. Amstrad machines can start off 100% compatible, at least in theory, and the company's lawyers can threaten anyone who tries to copy the design.

ROM RIGHTS

In practice things may not be so simple. The original 16K Spectrum ROM – the only part of the built-in software needed for compatability – was written by a Cambridge maths firm, Nine Tiles. According to the rather jaundiced Penguin book *Sinclair And The Sunrise Technology*, Sinclair never signed a contract for the code. It's still not clear who owns the ROM.

The legal position is complicated anyway. Seven years ago a firm called Comp Shop copied the ROM chip in Sinclair's ZX-80, to produce a machine called the Micro Ace. When the case came to court Sinclair was unable to convince the judge that the Micro Ace ROM was a copy of the ZX-80 code, because the judge said he 'could not see' the code in the chip!

Sinclair eventually won with the argument that the Micro Ace keyboard – which the judge *could* see – was a copy of the ZX-80 keyboard. It need not have been; on the basis of that case, it would be quite possible to clone the ZX-80 legally. The law is no clearer now than it was then.

Soon after that case Sinclair produced the ZX-81, which, like the Spectrum, incorporates a complicated custom chip. These chips are hard to copy because they do a lot of work in one unique package, but once you understand how they work it's not too tricky to assemble an equivalent circuit with other parts.

THE SUPERCLONE

For much of the last year, in considerable secrecy, a team of experienced computer-designers has been hawking around the working prototype of a new 128K Spectrum design – a true Spectrum clone, with a target price of £99.95, a faster processor and improved graphics.

They need at least a million pounds to start production, and have asked that their well-known company not be identified till sensitive financial negotiations with a major industry backer are concluded.

The superclone – it has no firm name yet – is designed very much in the Sinclair style, though it uses much more modern components. It has 128K of RAM, 32K of ROM, and a Z80B processor that runs up to 70 per cent faster than the Spectrum's Z80A. The prototype's sound chip is the same as on the Amstrad/Sinclair 128 and Atari ST; the designers would prefer to fit a more modern stereo chip, but that may be a bad move if it reduces software compatibility.

The only other chip on the main circuit board is a massive 84-pin 1800-gate logic array, which ties the system together and provides lots of I/O ports.

The display can appear just like a Spectrum, with 256 x 192 dots and character-square attributes, or you can have an 80-column two-colour text display. Best of all, there's a new 16-colour graphics mode, with eight independent attributes for each row of dots in a character square. Games that use that mode should look impressive, with less block flicker than current Spectrum titles.

The ports on the machine include one standard socket for a joystick or mouse, a telephone socket for MIDI (musical instrument) input as well as output, a cassette port, two network sockets similar to but incompatible with the ZX network, and outputs for sound, RGB/SCART, Composite video monitors, and PAL UHF televisions.

There's also a light-pen port which works properly, unlike previous Spectrum light-pen ports, as the clone's logic array contains two registers which let programs know the exact coordinate that is being scanned by the TV at any time. This will be very useful for game-programmers even if the light pen isn't used. Most games have to wait for the start of a frame to be sure they're not upsetting the display as it is drawn. The registers make such caution unnecessary.

The final display circuit is on a separate board, and is not needed if you're using a monitor – which makes the machine cheaper for educational users. Sound is routed through the TV or the socket on the back of the machine; there's no speaker inside.

Neither serial nor parallel ports are standard, but an edge connector accepts simple Spectrum peripherals like the Specdrum, Kempston joystick and ROM cartridges. A smart cable' target price £9 – can be used to connect that port to a Centronics printer.

The keyboard is like that of an Apricot, but with fewer keys and no MicroScreen LCD display. At last you can press a second key before releasing the first one, and the computer still reads both. Commands are typed in full: there's no keyword-entry. Internally the circuit is still based on the Spectrum's 40-key grid, with an extra eight keys in a new bank.

THE SUPERCLONE'S COMPATIBILITY

The superclone is highly compatible with Spectrum hardware – the sound, keyboard, cassette and display ports are in the same places, and the memory-map can be identical to a 48K Spectrum. 128

paging works differently on the superclone, albeit better.

The increased processor speed (6MHz) is offset to some extent by contention from the video circuit, but program code still runs faster than on a normal Spectrum. This doesn't always affect games, which are often synchronised to each display frame so that they run at a constant speed regardless of how much they have to do onscreen.

The superclone's hardware-designer claims total compatability, but I don't believe that. 'I haven't found a game that doesn't work,' he responded – so Tech Tips will test that with a set of the most bad-tempered programs I know!

The superclone's ROM is *not* a copy of the Spectrum ROM, though in theory you can run any ROM you like by saving a copy on tape and loading it into the superclone's RAM. I suspect that his claim is based on the use of such a technique. The hardware imposes no restrictions on memory-paging, and the display can be in any 16K bank.

The superclone's own ROM supports the most important Spectrum system calls – display, keyboard input and so on – with different code. Cassette files use the Spectrum format but normally SAVE 50% faster than the Spectrum; the LOAD routine analyses the tone at the start of each file and automatically adjusts to suit the speed of the recording.

The superclone has a new fast BASIC, adapted to resemble Sinclair BASIC. Andy Wright, of BetaBASIC fame, is a consultant on that part of the project. Present plans mean it may not be possible to LOAD ZX BASIC programs directly, unless you first load a page of RAM with a copy of Sinclair's ZX BASIC ROM.

The internal format is altered to give greater speed and allow programs to break Sinclair's 40K limit. Superclone BASIC programs can be as big as your RAM. The disk system for the machine is still in development, but shouldn't be a problem – the company developing the hardware already has two Spectrum disk interfaces to its credit. The planned unit for the superclone is controlled directly from the logic array, comes with another 128K of RAM, and costs the same as the computer: £99.95. The impressive thing is the capacity: getting on for two megabytes on standard disk, using a new type of half-height 3.5-inch drive.

FUTURES

It's early days yet – though the supercloners have been working on their machine for 18 months – and some of the details are sure to change when the money comes through and production starts.

It seems unlikely that the machine will be on sale before the summer of 1988, and it may take longer still if Amstrad attempts to delay it in the courts. But the designers are confident of their legal position, though they wouldn't mind a bit of unintentional promotional help from Amstrad. It's all very exciting, and we'll have lots more news next month.

+3 FAULTS

REPORTS of +3 problems are coming in thick and fast. I'm still not sure whether program incompatibilities stem from misloads or hardware faults, but it seems Amstrad has introduced extra circuitry in the +3 that banishes the Spectrum's old tolerance of tape recorders. Gaps on tape fill with noise as if a level-control circuit were working overtime. If anyone has a cure for this – or can tell me what to disconnect – please write in!

These are the more specific problems:

1 MISSING VECTORS

Sinclair's Spectrum 128 contained a table of addresses so that you could call routines in the editor ROM without worrying about changes between versions of the ROM. The Sinclair documentation said it was important to use those addresses to preserve compatability with future machines.

The error-handling routine, at address $1303 in the Spectrum main ROM, attempts to page in the +2 ROM on the +3.

It fails, as you might expect! This causes problems for programs that call the code directly.

2 COPY BUGS

Alan Giles of Three Inch Software has got two drives on his +3, and reports that while COPY A: to B: works fine, copying the other way does nothing at all. This is because drive B: is never set up in the second case, so the system copies a zero-sized disk – a brief and pointless process.

A more serious bug crops up when you COPY files from drive to drive with a large program or machine code in memory. The file COPY routine uses a 2K buffer to store the information it is copying, but unfortunately that buffer is stored in RAM bank 0 at address 60689 – on top of the last 5K of BASIC workspace, corrupting your program or data.

The +3 manual suggests that no-one knew quite where the buffer would go when the machine was documented. 'Note that the +3's COPY command may well use buffers in the second screen area' it says on page 189. The second screen is page 7, and could be moved in place of the area presently clobbered – but that doesn't happen on current machines.

3 SLOW BASIC

When the Spectrum came out it was criticised for the slow speed of its BASIC. That's always seemed rather unfair to me, especially as ZX BASIC has many timesaving friendly features - not forgetting variable values when you edit a line, for instance. In any case, the bodges and patches added over the years have slowed down +3 BASIC.

In tests with a new +3 and my old Issue 1 Spectrum I found that ZX BASIC runs between 30% and 40% slower in +3 BASIC than in 48K BASIC. It's worth bearing this in mind if you're programming a disk Spectrum, especially as you still can't enter more than 41K of program and data, even in + BASIC.

4 MISSED CONNECTIONS

The +3 has an edge connector at the back which looks like the one on earlier Spectrums, but appearances are deceptive. The video signals are no longer present and, more importantly, the 9V power supply used by some peripherals is missing, as is the -5V supply. Luckily the main regulated 5V rail is still there, so simple interfaces can still run from the Spectrum's internal power.

The most important missing signals are IORQGE, which used to let you turn off the logic array, and ROMCS, which disables the computer's ROM so an external device can supply alternative code.

Nothing with its own ROM will work on the +3 unless it's redesigned – this includes most clever things, like Multifaces, Microdrives, the VTX modem and Currah Microspeech. A new Multiface is already available for the +3, but the required changes make it incompatible with older machines.

It would take quite a complicated adapter, connected to the edge connector, to fix this problem and allow old devices to be plugged in. In theory Amstrad could reverse this incompatibility in future machines, as the ROMCS line has not been used for anything else.

DEBUZZING THE 128

IF you own a Spectrum 128 there's a fair chance it produces a few extra, unwanted sounds through the TV speaker as well as the usual repertoires of bleeps and hisses. It's common to find that one setting of the TV tuner gives a crystal-clear sound and a fuzzy or black-and-white picture, while another tuning gives a good picture but noisy sound. If your +2 suffers from this problem, this tip should help.

The noise crops up because of the way sound and vision are transmitted to the TV. Broadcast TV uses two different channels, with a fixed frequency gap between the sound and the vision for each station. And the size of the gap varies between European countries.

Computers use a silver box of tricks – the modulator – to convert their signals so that they resemble a broadcast and can be picked up by a TV. 48K Spectrums produce a picture but no sound through a TV. Their sound effects come from a tiny earpiece, similar to the 'speaker' in a telephone, mounted on the circuit board.

The first machines drove this earpiece from the 5V power that supplies the computer logic, but this gave very little volume and could upset the logic. Issue 3 Spectrum sound is powered by the 48K Spectrum's so-called 9V supply, which usually turns out around 11 volts! This makes things louder without disturbing the rest of the computer, but the earpiece is still rather feeble.

Sinclair realised they'd have to do something better in the 128, which uses a sound chip that can play up to three notes at once, with 16 possible volume levels for each note. The answer was to throw out the earpiece and to send the sound to the TV. This works fine, as long as the computer is set up to use exactly the right gap between the video and sound channels.

After two weeks with a noisy +2, Tech Tipster **John Parlato** threw caution and warranty to the wind. This is how he stopped the background noise. The operation is simple – it just involves tweaking a screw inside the computer – but your guarantee may not be honoured if anyone notices that you have been fiddling inside the machine. If in doubt, leave it alone or get a professional to do the job.

GETTING INSIDE IT

The first step is to unplug the computer, turn it upside down and remove the screws holding the base. Put the screws somewhere safe and turn the +2 over, gently lifting the keyboard sway from the base. Reconnect the power and hold down the BREAK key so that the TV Test display appears. There are no dangerous voltages inside the +2, but it's unwise to touch the circuitry while you've got the box open.

Tune in the TV to give a clear picture, without worrying about the sound. It may be sensible to leave the machine for a few minutes, especially if you've only just started using it, so that the tuning can settle as it warms up.

The test display is accompanied by beeping. John found that he could tune the sound in accurately by turning a screw in the silver box mounted on the circuit board, directly under the left-hand shift key. You may find it helps to turn the screw with a plastic blade, as metal screwdrivers can disturb the circuit. One setting of this screw gives near-perfect, buzz-free sound through the TV.

If you're uncertain about fiddling around inside the machine you may be able to get good results by connecting the LINE IN or AUDIO IN sockets of a video or music centre to the SOUND or EAR socket on the back of the computer. If you're lucky enough to own a video monitor this is probably the only way you can get sound out of your Spectrum 128.

THAT'S INTERFERENCE

These tips should help if your TV can already be tuned to give clear sound with a fuzzy picture, but they're unlikely to make much difference if you get interference all the time – even when you connect an amplifier to the sound socket on the back of the +2. In that case the problem is probably caused by interference between the +2's cassette recorder and the sound circuit.

As I noted in CRASH Issue 38, you can often cure this problem by putting a switch in the red wire from the computer circuit board to the cassette unit. The switch lets you cut off power to the cassette, stopping the interference except when you turn the tape drive on in order to use it. Of course you can kiss your guarantee goodbye if you make this modification!
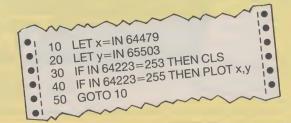
MOUSE TALES

THIS MONTH'S £30 software prize goes to **Andrew Haslam**, who's sent in a wonderfully concise program that illustrates exactly how to control BASIC program with a mouse.

Andrew read about Paul Cotton's Kempston Mouse problems in Issue 46; he has discovered three IN commands that let you read the mouse position and both buttons from BASIC or machine code. The listing is his program – a trivial drawing routine, where the left button lifts the 'pen' off the screen and the right button clears the display. It's not really useful as it stands, but it's a good starting point for further experiments.

According to Andrew, the program works with the Kempston Mouse and its clones; I haven't got the right interface to be able to test it.

IN 64479 reads the horizontal position of the mouse, and IN 65503 gives the vertical position. The two buttons are read with IN 64223, which gives 252 if both are pressed, 253 for the right button only and 254 for the left button. You get 255 if neither button is pressed.

```
10  LET x=IN 64479
20  LET y=IN 65503
30  IF IN 64223=253 THEN CLS
40  IF IN 64223=255 THEN PLOT x,y
50  GOTO 10
```

WAFADRIVEL

I'VE HAD several letters recently from readers who have bought Rotronics Wafadrives. These drives – sort of scaled-up Microdrives – reached the market three years ago at a price of £130, but they didn't sell well and Rotronics went bust in 1986. The drives have recently been sold off cheaply via Microfairs and mail order.

The Wafadrive mechanism was not developed by Rotronics but by two large firms, Astec and BSR. Astec makes the silver TV modulators in most computers and consoles, among other things, and BSR makes turntables. The drives were designed for use in industrial machines, so they're reliable but rather slow. The Rotronics package includes two drives, plus serial and parallel interfaces.

WAFA GREED

The biggest problem when using the Wafadrive is that it steals more than 2K of the Spectrum's memory as soon as you turn the interface on.

Many disk and tape systems steal memory, but the Wafadrive is the greediest and most inflexible I've come across. It uses the area from address 237554 to address 26046, and many popular games and utilities want to put code in that area.

Unless you're a high-powered hacker, there are only two ways to load programs that use the memory snatched by the Wafadrive.

The cheapest but most fiddly option is to use *007 Multispy*, a collection of utility programs from ZX Guaranteed (061 766 5712) which chop programs up and shuffle them around in memory so that they don't disturb the drive.

The best, but expensive, option is Romantic Robot's Multiface One, which does the whole job at the press of a button. Both techniques will only transfer 48K programs – the Wafadrive doesn't work with a Spectrum 128.

WAFA SPEED

Wafadrives aren't very fast, but you can get fairly good results if you understand a bit about the way they work. Wafadrives use a continuous loop of tape, like Microdrives. The data is stored all along the tape and read off in 1K lumps; this means you may have to wait for the tape to go all the way round before a file starts to load.

The data is much less densely packed than on a Microdrive. This improves reliability but slows things down – it can take up to 45 seconds to find a file on a 128K Wafa, though 20 seconds is more typical. Wafas come in three sizes: 16K, 64K and 128K. The 16K Wafa is fastest, and usually responds in about three seconds – much the same speed as a 90K Microdrive cartridge.

The exact position of files on the Wafa determines how long they take to load. Most programs load in several parts, and it's vital to record the parts in sequence on the tape if you want them to load quickly without time-wasting searching for the next file. You can ensure this by reformatting a tape before use, then saving each file with this sequence of commands:
SAVE *"A:NAME": VERIFY *"A:NAME": CAT #
Don't use any other commands between SAVEs to that Wafa, or you'll disturb the position of the tape.

WAFA BUGS

There were two minor but annoying bugs in the ROM software built into the first 50,000 Wafadrives; as far as I know this includes all the drives sold in the UK. You can't save files just one byte long – this may not seem a major problem, but some tapes use such files as part of their protection system, making them difficult to transfer to a Wafa. It's also impossible to save the byte at address 65535, the last byte in memory. *007 Multispy* and the Multiface avoid these problems.

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

LLOYD MANGRAM'S
LOOKBACK – 1987

TRENDS noticeable in 1985 and 1986 continued not only unabated throughout 1987, but even accelerated; and most major software houses fronted with licences and conversions. There are some very good reasons why coin-op arcade games should find their way onto home micros – about the same sorts of reasons why good novels find their way onto the TV and cinema screen – but good reasons aren't enough alone; just as books can be ruined in their adaption, so can arcade originals in their conversion.

Licences are really much harder to defend, since the source is frequently unsuited to a computer game theme, and if it wasn't so often sad, it would be an amusing sport to watch frantic programmers desperately struggling to pick on something in 'their' film on which they might hang a reasonable game. During 1987 the commercial notion that a 'name', whether it be a famous person, incident, book or fictitious character, can sell a computer game, whether it be good, indifferent or poor, took a much firmer hold. It's a cynical notion, that reckons people are so gullible that because they adored *Rombo Clone Wars* starring Arnold Stalnegger at the cinema, they'll go out in their droves and by the licensed game from Slipshodsoft without waiting to see whether it's any good or not.

Yet 1987 has seen at least one major software house come to terms with its reputation for unevenly implemented licences and tackle the problem in the only sensible way – place more stress on better game design, programming and, most importantly, better playtesting. A pointer to the future, and a hope, perhaps, that the more professional this industry becomes, the better the product may be, rather than poorer and less caring.

The other 8-bit trend, most noticeable with Spectrum software, has been the growth of budget labels and titles. Had CRASH opted for a 'budget review ghetto' a few months back, as had been internally suggested, then today there would be few pages of reviews! No-one has quite agreed yet whether the burgeoning budget is a Good Thing or a Bad One. On the whole the quality of budget releases is still universally poor when you consider how many there are, and despite the notable exceptions Mastertronic (in its various guises) and Code Masters have given us occasionally.

The saving grace has been the sheer size of the 8-bit market. Software houses don't yet seem prepared to let full-price games slip away, and ironic as it may be, the advent of a 16-bit market with competitively priced machines like the Atari ST providing a real alternative for upgrading, is likely to force companies to produce even better Spectrum and CBM64 games to maintain the 8-bit sales.

Bearing all this in mind, let's take a trip down cliché lane and rip through some of the good times and some of the bad of 1987 . . .

JANUARY

AFTER a prestigious launch with *The Art Studio* and some complex music utilities, British Telecom's **Rainbird** label had remained quiescent on the Spectrum, now it kicked off the New Year with two Smashes, *Starglider* and *Jewels Of Darkness*. The 48K *Starglider* was hailed as 'amongst the best games to grace the Spectrum', but it was the 128K version that kept the office minions working after hours, and rated at 97%, it was one of the highest Smashes ever. Written by **Realtime Software** (*3-D Tank Duel, Starstrike*), it featured incredibly fast 3-D vector graphics, an assortment of enemies to kill as well numerous missions to be undertaken. Rainbird gave it the VIP treatment from its lavish packaging to a 64-page novelette which gave clues as to how the game should be played.

Later in the year the Atari ST version featured on the TV programme *Get Fresh*. So impressive was *Starglider* that since then it has reversed natural trends to be converted into an arcade machine. It has been Rainbird's only arcade game to date, but the company has become noted for its adventures. They took over veterans **Level 9 Computing** and *Jewels Of Darkness* was a compilation of three of Level 9's early hits, *Colossal Adventure, Adventure Quest* and *Dungeon Adventure*. Each game was revamped with improved text and the addition of graphics. Once again Rainbird packaged it lavishly with a short novella by Peter McBride. The compilation was highly recommended by Derek.

The undead were dragged into the Spectrum's 3-D isometric sphere with *Nosferatu*, licensed from the silent Twenties film of the same name. Pitting the player against the dastardly demon vampire, *Nosferatu* consisted of three main stages, the middle one of which had the player controlling three characters! The game was an instant Smash with reviewers, which was nice for **Design Design** who wrote it, and for Macmillan's fledgling label, **Piranha**, who marketed it.

Piranha's second release of the month, *Rogue Trooper*, again programmed by Design Design, and based on the comic-book hero made famous in *2000 AD*, wasn't received with quite the same enthusiasm as *Nosferatu*. Comments ranged from 'too boring' to 'I could play this game for hours', but one aspect all the reviewers agreed on was that it was just too easy to play.

Other licensed games of the month included *Marble Madness*, *Tarzan* and *Space Harrier*. *Marble Madness* clones had been floating around for months, many failing to impress. **Melbourne House** tried topping the lot by releasing the *Marble Madness Construction Set*. The inclusion of a screen designer did little to push its ratings up and many felt it was a poor effort when compared with *Gyroscope*, a previous variant on the same theme also by Melbourne House.

Martech's *Tarzan* had you hurtling through the jungle in a loin cloth in a bid to rescue your beloved Jane from the hands of the Usanga tribe. We recognised that it contained some pretty pictures but at 73% overall the game was nothing special. Neither was **Elite**'s anxiously awaited conversion of the arcade hit *Space Harrier*, which projected the Midlands company into the New Year on a continuing spate of licensed arcade games. In truth most aspects of *Space Harrier* were reasonable, but it wasn't ideally suited to the Spectrum, and without the original's moving cabinet, the game seemed to lose something and came out with a score of 77%.

The Edge started 1987 with *Fairlight II: Trial Of Darkness*, sequel to the 1985 Smash *Fairlight*. What seemed destined to be a hit failed to live up to our expectations, falling short of a Smash with 81%. Author **Bo Jangeborg** was praised for the the highly detailed two-colour graphics, but was criticised for the game's slowness and the extreme similarity that it bore to *Fairlight*. Just going to show that graphics maketh not a game.

January also saw **Microsphere**'s first release for quite some time. Could they keep up the standard set by earlier hits such as *Skool Daze* and *Back To Skool*? *Contact Sam Cruise* certainly did nothing to harm Microsphere's image as a

producer of original, high quality software. A Smash with 93%, *Contact Sam Cruise*, written by **Dave Reidy**, was credited with having a Raymond Chandler flavour about it, as the player roamed the city streets trying to solve a case while avoiding gangland heavies partial to a bit of Sam bashing.

Pete Cooke scored his first hit of the year for **CRL** with *Academy*, the long awaited sequel to *Tau Ceti*. Following in the same vein as its predecessor, *Academy* set tasks of varying difficulty. for the player to overcome. The game also included an option to define your own skimmer, but as weight had to be taken into consideration it was impossible to equip yourself as an indestructable super fortress. Described as 'amazingly good', *Academy* was Smashed at 92%. Pete Cooke's programming abilities seemed to have improved with his last few games, and as it turned out, *Academy* was not to be his last hit in 1987.
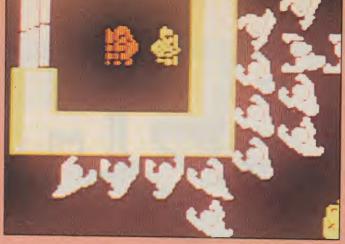
FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY deluged the Towers under an avalanche of software – obviously lots of Christmas releases that had just missed the seasonal deadline. It seemed to be the month of the tie-in with *Gauntlet* and *Top Gun* topping the bill. Incidently a third of February's releases came from either US Gold, Imagine or Ocean. It was also the first time in CRASH history that the ratings system was overhauled to bring it more in line with the times. From February forth the reviewers' comments would be credited with their names.

After months of clones and poor imitations the official **US Gold** conversion of *Gauntlet* arrived, and blasted away the competition. Smashed with an overall of 92%, *Gauntlet* was a great game and one not to be missed. To accommodate the original's great size the programmers had elected to use a multiload system to expand the game's potential – not the first time a Smashed game had used this system and certainly not the last. Nevertheless even with this system the graphics were not very impressive. Where *Gauntlet* differed from many of its imitators was with its simultaneous two-player option, not quite as much fun as the four-player original but nevertheless a vast improvement on the one-player, antisocial clones, and a huge saving in 10ps.

Electric Dreams's first release of the year was a licensed game based on the scary movie *Aliens*. The player controlled Ripley, four space marines and an android as they entered the Alien Queen's egg-laying chamber to kill her. The graphics were neat and it certainly had atmosphere, but thankfully the game wasn't as gory as the film. We had no real complaints but just felt that it wasn't quite good enough to warrant a Smash.

Ocean fared a touch better with their film licence, the fine aerial dogfight simulator *Top Gun*, which tested the player's flying abilities to the hilt. Although it lacked Tom Cruise, and while the graphics were simplistic vector affairs, the game made up for these shortcomings in its gameplay. The player chased the computer's plane through the heavens, trying to gun it down before it got you. If this became boring then a two-player option allowed for head-to-head combat with your best friend. Yet another hit game which proved that playing computer games isn't necessarily antisocial.

Eccentric tie-in of the month awards went to *The Archers* and *Donkey Kong*. *The Archers* was released by **Mosaic**, but it was the skillful programming by the bunch at **Level 9** that turned what was potentially a very dull game into an enjoyable experience. The object was actually to keep up the long-running radio show's audience ratings. As with *Adrian Mole*, also released by Mosaic, you didn't have to input replies but were given a number of options to choose from. Strangely, although its overall rating was 90% it wasn't a Smash, probably an oversight between editorial and art, rather than Derek's intention.

Ocean's *Donkey Kong* was an oddity because they had released *Kong* some years previously. In those dim and distant days people didn't seem to bother so much with the proprieties of licensing, so perhaps Ocean thought it was time to redress the balance and do it properly. In the event, this version was licensed from the Nintendo arcade machine, and while the reviewing minions thought it a good conversion, they also felt that it was just a few years too late.

Speaking of **Ocean**, February saw them releasing *Highlander*, another game based, although loosely, on a film. Programmed by **Canvas** (the splinter from Denton Designs), it centred on only one aspect of the film, the fight sequences. You played the part of McLeod set against three opponents, Ramirez (very strange as he was McLeod's friend in the film), Fizir and Kurgen (the mighties of the bunch), and each character had to be loaded separately. On the whole it was a disappointing product that bore little resemblance to events in the excellent and quirky film.

Imagine released a real clutch of games including *Yie Ar Kung Fu II*, *Super Soccer* and *Konami's Golf*. Probably best of the bunch was *Terra Cresta*, yet another coin-op conversion. This shoot-'em-up with its vertically scrolling format bore a striking resemblance to that old arcade favourite, *Xevious*, the Spectrum conversion of which **US Gold** also released in the same month but it got a lower rating. Graphically *Terra cresta* was nothing special, but shoot-'em-ups can always be great fun and this was no exception. Given an 81% rating, it was felt to be just a touch too expensive, considering what you got.

Torus, the programmers of *Gyron* and the Spectrum version of *Elite*, unveiled their third game, *Hive* on the **Firebird** Gold label. Set on the insect-populated planet of Gamma V, the player penetrated the hive's complex defences to eliminate the Queen at the centre of a network of tunnels, and needed to find a laser and other assorted goodies such as key cards to gain admittance into areas sited about the tunnels. We were divided in our opinions of the latest Torus game. Some thought it looked impressive but lacked enough real excitement to make it brilliant, while Ben felt that the game would become a cult. I guess Ben's prophetic powers aren't fully developed yet . . .

Impossaball narrowly missed out on Smash status by receiving 89%. Written by newcomer to the Spectrum **John Philips** and marketed by **Hewson**, it had the player guiding a bouncing ball down eight progressively harder corridors. The scrolling of the graphics was excellent, and in general the whole package was very polished, but it just lacked that little something that turns a good game into a Smash.

Then spring arrived . . .

MARCH

AFTER flushed February mordant March was most notable for its absence of good software. Perhaps the spring hadn't quite sprung then . . .

Most games released hovered around the sixties mark with *Feud* and *Ranarama* standing head and shoulders above the rest.

The major event of the month was the take over of veteran **Melbourne House** by budget software giants **Mastertronic** for a claimed seven-figure sum. Both software houses still published under their own names with Melbourne House occupying the full-price range and Mastertronic concentrating its labels on the budget market.

In a doubtful attempt to prove they were still in operation, Melbourne House finally released *Judge Dredd*. Based on one of comics' most famous cult characters from *2000 AD*, it was always going to be a risky licence in the eyes of Dredd fans, and perhaps Melbourne House took it in entirely the wrong direction. It was basically a platform game with the player jumping around the screen shooting perpetrators (perps to the cognoscenti) who threatened Mega City One. *Judge Dredd* was inevitably a great disappointment to CRASH Towers, especially after waiting so long for it. The comic stories provided plenty of scope for a game but Melbourne House failed to implement any elements that made the strip a hit.

Perhaps we could be kinder to Melbourne House's second March release? *Fist II*, sequel to *The Way of the Exploding Fist*, set you the task of finding a temple, entering it thus making you invincible, and overthrowing the evil Warlord who ruled your land with terror. Sadly, we couldn't. Expectations ran high but the game didn't quite deliver the goods. Despite the 16 fight moves available, the action in between fight sequences was dull, and it gave the impression of being very mundane.

Programmed by **Binary Design** and released by Mastertronic's **Bulldog Software** label, *Feud* was one of the highspots of the month. Playing the part of one of two feuding medieval brothers, the object was to run around the playing area collecting ingredients to mix spells and potions which created havoc for your sibling. *Feud* was the first Bulldog release, and further showed how Budget games were coming of age. At £1.99 the game provided excellent value for money, with large, well animated graphics and the real bonus of gameplay which really kept the player on his toes.

Greyfell was the first release for another new games label, **Starlight Software**. An evil wizard had brought misery to the forced perspective world of Greyfell, and only by stomping on meanies to kill them, and by collecting useful objects, did you have a chance of ridding the land of the wizard's baleful influence. *Greyfell* was well presented but its gameplay left a lot to be desired.

After eons of waiting **Activision**'s *The Little Computer People* (LCPs) finally emerged from our Spectrums, although it transpired that only 128K machines were big enough for them to inhabit. You remember the story; not so much a game more a way of life, the package supposed that Pet People were little beings who lived inside your (128K) computer, and you were responsible for feeding and keeping them happy. Each pet had its own personality and preferences, and simple keyboard instructions could request the pet to do things such as play records, take a bath or play a game with you on its (128K) computer. tedious.

But it had taken too long in coming out on the Spectrum and excitement created initially by the CBM 64 disk version had worn off. Novel it may have been, but the Spectrum's limitations imposed on the program made it less flexible, and in truth it was a touch tedious.

Ever one for turning principles into frogs, **Steve Turner** took the *Gauntlet* theme a step further for **Hewson** with *Ranarama*. Much in

the same vein as the original, *Ranarama* expanded on the idea and improved it a great deal. Turner, author of *Dragontorc* and *Quazatron* among others, cast the player as Mervyn, a failed sorcerer's apprentice who, by a series of miscast spells, ends up in amphibian form. The castle has been overrun by evil warlocks and other assorted unpleasantries and Mervyn must save the day by annihilating them, and restoring himself to human form in the process. Its presentation differed from *Gauntlet*, fitting more than one room on screen at a time, and while the graphics were good the animation tended to get a bit messy at times. But once again it was the highly addictive gameplay that made this game a Smash for Hewson.

On the down side, *Brian Clough's Football Fortunes*, which had featured on the Christmas Special cover, enjoyed less favour than fortune, with 42% for **CDS**, occasioning comments typical of many hybrid board/computer games reviews before it – it seemed the software side had been neglected.

US Gold's *Masters Of The Universe* licence hit rock-bottom, while **Leisure Genius** fared only slightly better with the licence they had been working on for well over a year, *Scalextric*. **Electric Dreams**, too, seemed to be a software house in search of success after its pre-Christmas launch; *Explorer*, the game boasting a ludicrous 40 billion mappable screens, and *Tempest*, the wire-frame shoot-'em-up from the arcades, failed to impress deeply.

Fortunately there was a highlight though, and undoubtedly the event of the month was an interview with **Bernie Drummond** and **Jon Ritman**, the men behind the hit game *Batman*, which gave the reviewing team their first glance at *Head Over Heels* – but more of that in a moment.

APRIL

THE APRIL issue of CRASH saw some spring-cleaning at the Towers. Founding editor and all-round slave-driver Roger Kean was taken off the mantlepiece, given a good dusting and reinstated at the helm while Graeme Kidd departed with the wintry weather for the editorship of trendy magazine LM. Hannah Smith departed from the Playing Tips for the sweet smell of pastures new, and a newcomer to these hallowed pages was Richard Eddy, who made the transition from AMTIX! to CRASH reviewer with the minimum amount of fuss besides the odd cry of 'bwah, monster' and his driller killer laugh.

US Gold's CBM 64 hit *Leader Board* finally made it on a Spectrum green. It took us all hours of persuasion to dissuade Roger Kean from donning his flat cap and awful houndstooth-check plus-fours and giving it a bash. *Leader Board* was the very best golfing simulation we had seen. Featuring a four-player option, budding golfers could play on any of four 18-hole courses with three

levels of play. Notorious for their boredom factor, reviewers don't look forward to golfing simulations, but *Leader Board* surpassed all past expectations, and although a bit slow to play at the start, perseverance resulted in an enjoyable game which got 80%.

A strong contender for game of the year was *Head Over Heels* released by **Ocean** and written by the duo **Ritman** and **Drummond**. It had the reviewers raving.

Set in a far away galaxy, four planets ruled by the tyrannical Emperor (from the planet Blacktooth) are in turmoil. Two spies from the planet Freedom have been sent to provoke revolution and recover the lost crowns from the slave planets. *Head Over Heels* utilised the isometric forced perspective now a commonplace. It led to an immediate comparison with the earlier Batman as well, but Ritman and Drummond injected much into the stale format. For a start the spies Head and Heels, separated at the start, had different abilities, and were controlled as separate units or could be united to perform tasks that each alone could not. Added to this novel approach were the many puzzles, collection of objects whose purposes were not immediately apparent, and the marvellous arcade action. *Head Over Heels* more than adequately proved that good computer games do not depend merely on appearances but on game design as well, and it certainly deserved its rare accolade, a Smash at 97%.

Breakout games enjoyed a comeback, and **Imagine**'s *Arkanoid* received an overall score of 59%.

This souped-up version of the ancient hit, despite some odd programming which made some of it idiosyncracies a bit hard to handle, proved to be thoroughly addictive. After five years the game hadn't made any major improvements on the original, but just went to show that some games never die, they simply get rewritten. The review led to a battle when many readers, horrified at the low rating, attacked in the Forum, a fight which was to hot up in the following month when Gremlin Graphic's version, *Krakout*, received a higher percentage.

Breakout was not the only golden oldie to be rewritten this month with the advent of *Classic Muncher* from **Bubble Bus**, a variant on the well worn *Pacman* theme. Consisting of six infinitely repeating screens, *Classic Muncher* played exactly like its inspiration, and while bringing back flashes of nostalgia, it did little to impress, scoring a miserable 41%.

Telecomsoft's first Smash of the year came in the form of **Firebird Silver**'s *I, Ball*. At £1.99 it provided astounding value for money, and after some tediously sub-average product, showed that Firebird still had it in them to produce an excellent low-cost game and give Mastertronic a run for their budgets. Most notable was the excellent digitised speech, best heard through some sort of amplifier as the Spectrum's own inbuilt buzzer wasn't really up to it. The gameplay was terrific and it

had us all addicted within a short time.

If addiction be the food of love, then indigestion is much the same as repeating things – we had **Elite**'s *Bombjack II*, which didn't do too badly at 71% but failed to satisfy as much as its predecessor had done, there was *The Growing Pains Of Adrian Mole* from **Mosaic** (but marketed by **Virgin Games** this time round), which did almost as well as *its* ancestor at 88%, and there was **Software Projects**, striking back with *Escape From Singe's Castle: Dragon's Lair II*, which also did pretty well with 83%. In each case the game was more than reasonable, but the surfeit may have caused the reviewers to sicken. It looked like it was time for May . . .

MAY

MAY'S edition of CRASH was a bit fat as spring/summer issues go due to the inclusion of a giant 32-page Playing Tips bonanza lovingly compiled by yours truly over many sleepless nights. Past years had always seen the so-called summer slump, but May managed to produce a remarkably good crop of games from a surprisingly large selection, including the latest releases from both **Firebird** and **Ultimate**.
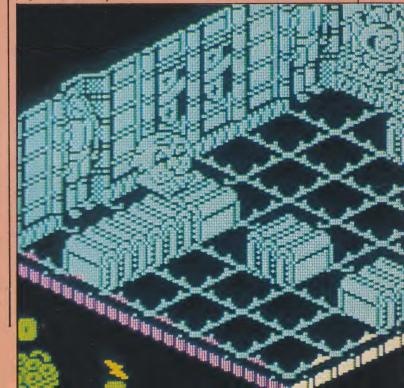
Over 24 months **Activision** had

not found much success with its Spectrum games but with the advent of *Enduro Racer* they set the record straight. Licensed from the arcade machine of the same name and programmed by **Giga Games**, it followed the original closely. The object of this bike race game was very simple – outrace the other bikers and complete each course in the quickest time possible. Each course contained different backdrops with logs, rocks and opponent racers acting as obstacles. Race games have always been firm favourites with the public and each year they improve in ingenuity, *Enduro Racer* lodged its way firmly amongst the greats of this type.

After Silver, it was Gold's turn; following hot on the heels of the budget *I, Ball*, **Firebird** secured themselves a second Smash in as many months. Costly at £9.95, *The Sentinel* still provided wonderful value for money. Once again we had a game that had been a huge hit on the CBM 64, and had then taken an age to appear on the Spectrum, but the implementation was finely tuned. The daunting task of rescuing 10,000 planets from the Sentinel and its Sentries through a process of power absorption, offered the player a game of thoughtful, chess-like strategy – where much consideration had to go into each move to ensure success – and sometimes furious activity. Its originality and the sheer depth of

▶ Our hero Heels explores

play made it a winner.

Martianoids was **Ultimate**'s first release of the year – and for some time. A 3-D forced perspective game, it cast the player in a defensive role with lasers for protection against marauding Martianoid machines. The tide had been slowly turning against Ultimate over a period, and *Martianoids* was criticised for below-standard graphics and poor gameplay, receiving only 58%. And it wasn't the only disappointment in May; *World Games* from **US Gold/Epyx** didn't quite live up to expectations either. Like *Winter Games* it was divided into several events with the player having to wait what seemed an eternity for individual events to load. Its graphics didn't impress as much as had its predecessor's, but it was otherwise an adequate sports simulation.

Indigestion was narrowly avoided by **Gremlin Graphics** when they released *Auf Wiedersehen Monty*, latest in the long line of Monty Mole games which had started back in 84 with *Wanted: Monty Mole*. Written by Monty's creator, **Peter Harrap** it followed his usual style of game, a complex platformer with devious traps and neat graphics and sound. It also sparked off a controversy within the reviewing ranks between those who were bored stiff of Monty, and those who still reckoned a game could be good despite its formulaic convention. The latter won out and *Auf Wiedersehen Monty* got 85% as Monty trekked across Europe to buy himself a nice Greek island so that he could be safe from the prying attentions of Intermole, the international crime fighting organisation. But in that missing five percent that would have made it a Smash like the previous Harrap 'Monty' games, perhaps there was a buried message that the formula *was* risking staleness.

Ocean hoped to give everyone a pleasant shock with *Short Circuit*, based somewhat loosely on the movie. It contained two distinct games, an arcade-adventure and a chase sequence. The arcade-adventure saw the hero-robot Number Five searching offices for extra parts and a means of escape, while the chase sequence, staged on a horizontally scrolling background, had him attempting to reach a van at the end of the track and escape to further adventures. Unfortunately the shock was more of a tingle, for despite the above-average graphics, the game suffered from tie-in-itis, a failure to pinpoint the film's best aspects.

In a bygone age **Gilsoft** released the marvellous *Quill*, a machine code utility which acted as a writing system for those who wanted to create adventures but couldn't program. Later they gave us the *Quill Illustrator*, and between them they supplied many a good game but were equally responsible for an influx of many bad ones. In 1987 Gilsoft excelled themselves and achieved a Smash with *The Professional Adventure Writer*, or *PAW* as it became known. A continuation of adventure writing systems, *PAW* was extremely well documented, making it much easier to use than

existing systems. As with many adventure writers, graphics could be drawn, but *PAW* really came into its own with its handling of vocabulary. Derek Brewster gave it 97% – and made it must for hopeful adventure programmers.

Reeling from the shock of a Firebird budget Smash the month before, **Mastertronic** hit back through their **M.A.D.** label with the peculiarly named *Amaurote* – and they got a Smash too. In *Amaurote* you freed sectors of a city from invading insect armies, destroying the Queen before she could produce more insect warriors and overwhelm you. **Binary Design**'s highly original monochromatic graphics made it look stunning. It was both playable and addictive and, in 128K mode, boasted extraordinarily atmospheric music which Ben Stone kept playing until we all felt like lasering him into oblivion.
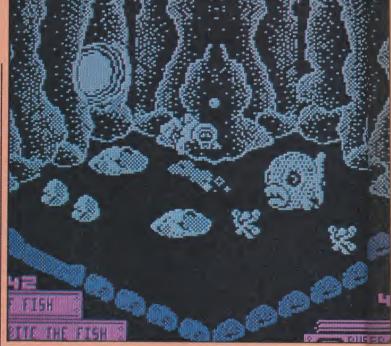
For two years **Mike Singleton** had held Derek Brewster in his 'Land Of Midnight' thrall. Now he reappeared somewhat outside the adventure area with *Throne Of Fire* for **Melbourne House**. Though in fact he hadn't programmed it, Mike played an important part in the game and graphics design. *Throne Of Fire* – three brothers battled for the throne of power with the player taking on the part of one of the brothers and the computer controlling the others – used a split-screen format similar to that of *Spy vs Spy*. It looked very good, but we felt it was a bit too easy to be really satisfying, although the game scored through an option for two players to take on a brother each while the computer played the remaining brother.

TALK OF THE DEVIL, having just mentioned it, in June *Spy vs Spy II* popped up. **Beyond**'s prequel had been a Smash some years before. The follow up, titled *Island Caper* and released through **Databyte**, saw the familiar black spy and white spy running around a tropical island searching for parts of a missile, using the Trapulator to lay devious traps as the means to exterminate each other. Oddly, the monochromatic presentation of the earlier game was dropped in favour of colour – too much in fact, and ugly attribute problems gave it a rather garish appearance. This wasn't really progress, with slow, jerky scrolling letting down a reasonably playable game, and reducing it to only 53%

You didn't have to be on a tropical island to enjoy the heat – this a was sunny June for a change, and there were 37 games in review! Could this really be summer? I can remember past Junes when we were lucky to scrape 15 games together. Mind you, a lot of the titles were budgets. No, we lacked not for games, but the Smashes were few.

Luckily *Hydrofool* from **FTL**, the Gargoyle Games label, gave us something to rave about – and kept us cool, for the sequel to the acclaimed *Sweevo's World* had Sweevo on a new mission this time under water, cleaning out the filthy

▶ A somewhat bewildered looking Sweevo encounters the over-friendly dolphin.

world known as Deathbowl. The famous Gargoyle sense of humour clearly emerged in Sweevo's task, pulling out each of the four plugs that held the water in, as assorted nasties tried anything to get rid of him. Stunning 3-D isometric graphics set on several levels, amusing animation and devious puzzles made it a hit, but *Hydrofool* was very derivative of *Sweevo's World*, and more likely to appeal, it was felt, to fans of the previous game.

In quick succession **Ultimate** slipped out another release in a marble vein of madness – *Bubbler*. It was an improvement on *Martianoids*, though not by sufficiently large a margin to improve their flavour to full. The planet Irkon, under the sway of the evil wizard Vadra, could be saved by corking magical bottles that controlled his power. Once again Ultimate chose to use monochromatic 3-D graphics with smooth screen scrolling. Inertial effects coupled with the awkward control method made movement along the walk-ways difficult but gameplay was lacking, and mixed feelings amongst the reviewers, led to an overall rating of 78%.

Not one to be outdone, June saw Derek Brewster following the Playing Tips supplement with his very own Adventure extravaganza. **Rainbird** finally released a Spectrum version of *The Pawn*, an acclaimed Atari ST hit. Sadly it came minus the pretty graphics but still enjoyed Derek's approval at 90%.

Melbourne House managed to top this, however, with *Shadows Of Mordor*, follow up to *The Lord Of The Rings*. Following the further adventures of Frodo and Sam in *The Two Towers*, it left the player to choose which character to play. *Shadows Of Mordor* retained the use of Inglish (the vocabulary system which made *The Hobbit* such a big hit), but only 128K Spectrums had enough memory for the graphics to be displayed.

Durell were also in full sequel mode and chasing another Smash with *Saboteur II* (or should it have been called *Sister Of Saboteur*?). With the hero of *Saboteur* dead, it was his sister who took up the

central role in a bid to stop the Dictator from using his hi-tech missile systems, while android warriors were out to stop the avenging angeline. There were improvements, but in style of play and graphical presentation it followed the first game very closely. These similarities resulted in a rating of 83%. Had a little more originality been used it might have made it to Smash status.

Elsewhere the software front was dismal. **Ocean**'s *Army Moves* looked good but odd collision detection made it frustrating, **Hewson** slipped up with *Gunrunner*, a scrolling shoot-'em-up with a stale format, **Quicksilva**'s wire-frame *Red Scorpion* was a poor *Battlezone* rehash that left everyone wondering whether the once-great software label would ever find a game of merit again. Even quirky **Piranha** disappointed with *Mr Weems*, while *Mario Bros* from **Ocean** was hardly the coin-op/ games console conversion we were hoping for, and most ludicrous licence (probably) of the year to date came from **Activision** in the quacky shape of *Howard The Duck* – and it was out for a duck as well.

At the very last moment *Barbarian* dashed to the rescue. **Palace Software** not only caused controversy with their adverts, but the review of the game didn't go down too well in some quarters. Simple enough in theme, it was a savage beat-'em-up with swords in a gladiatorial arena, but the first-rate practice mode and two-player option (on the cassette's B-side) together with fine monochromatic animation, made *Barbarian* one of the best fight games to emerge for a long while. Not quite a Smash, but very nearly.

NOW the 'summer slump' really started – it seems to get later every year – and not only did the number of games decrease but there was also a distinct lack of quality software, only *Zynaps* and *Killed Until Dead* saved the day.

Recovering from the uninspiring *Gunrunner*, **Hewson**'s next shoot-

'em-up (an old-fashioned genre which had hardly ever been in their repertoire) saw a change of pace, ideas and presentation. *Zynaps* was a classy, high-speed, horizontally-scrolling game, just about the ultimate in *Nemesis* clones in fact. Additional weaponry could be collected, improving your chances against the aliens but, basically you were on your own. With code by **Dominic Robinson** and snazzy graphics by **Steve Crow** looking like colourful, smooth-moving works of art, this shoot-'em-up was a joy to play. *Zynaps* served to relieve the boredom of a software-starved month.

The big surprise, however, was *Killed Until Dead* – a surprise because although the reviewing began early enough, no-one noticed how much this quiet game affected everyone else . . . but more of that below.

Before the month descended entirely into a slough of despond, we had *Stormbringer* on **M.A.D.**, latest in the long line of Mastertronic's 'Magic Knight' games. Having returned from *Knight Tyme* the hero had split into two personalities; one good and the other decidedly off colour. In merging the two egos you restored White Knight to his former glory. Programmed as usual by **David Jones**, it followed the same format of the previous 'Magic Knight' games in collecting objects and grouping them together to solve the numerous problems. And although it lived up to expectations already set with colourful, detailed graphics and devious puzzles, we were split over it; two reviewers reckoned it an excellent buy at £2.99, the other pointed out that it added little to the well-worn formula. The result averaged out at 86%.

And then there was *Thing Bounces Back* – a sequel without a Spectrum predecessor. **Gremlin Graphics**'s *Thing On A Spring* had been a big CBM 64 hit with its uniquely cute boinging character in battle against wicked toys in the evil Goblin's toy factory. In the unprecedented sequel *Thing* attempted to stop the flow of evil playthings by collecting components of a computer. The toy factory was an industrial complex of platforms and pipes which provided a game on par with the Monty Mole series, but disappointing documentation and awkward controls let it down considerably.

In the same month Gremlin released, at the slightly lower price of £4.99, *Alien Evolution*. A 3-D scrolling game with more than a passing resemblance to the ancient hit *Ant Attack* (reviewed in Issue One), it had the player ridding the planet's surface of invading aliens. Though very derivative, it remained playable and reasonably addictive, but the passage of time elapsed since *Ant Attack* lowered its rating to 75%.

The **MicroProse** association with American **Origin Systems**, noted for their accurate attack-flight simulations and software personality boss, ace fighter pilot Wild Bill Stealey, finally resulted in the Spectrum release of *F-15 Strike Eagle*. Flight sims rarely look their best on the Spectrum, but

▶ Where it all starts, seated at the desk, tape recorder on pause, telephone poised and notepad at the ready. Sleuths have never had it so comfortable!

this one contained as many thrills and spills as could be reasonably expected, and scored a very high 84%.

As for the rest – well July is probably better forgotten except for . . .

Killed Until Dead. So there we were, sitting at the back end of the schedule, putting the last of the reviews together, when suddenly Paul Sumner noted that he'd given it 93%. Roger Kean looked at the other comments already in and let fly with a gasp! A Smash had crept up on us! **US Gold**'s detective game was set firmly in favourite sleuthing land, a closed environment with only fellow amateur sleuths as the victims, murderers and hunters. At the Gargoyle Hotel all the world's greatest mystery writers had assembled for a reunion but one is a murderer and another the intended victim. Your task was to solve the mystery before the event could actually take place. *Killed Until Dead* was an enjoyable and involving mixture of intrigue and action in a race against time, topped off by atmospheric graphics and compelling gameplay – it illuminated gloomy July.
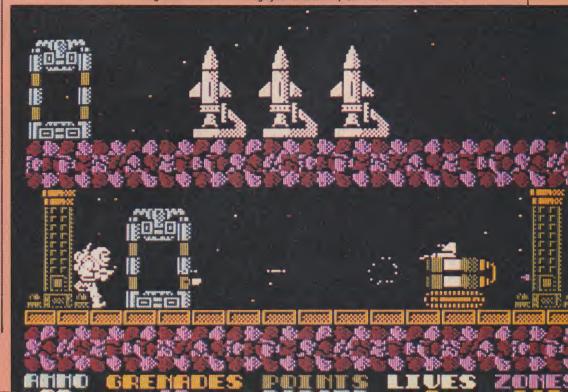
NOT CONTENT with resting on their recently regained laurels, **Hewson** followed up July's Smash with yet another all-blasting shoot-'em-up called *Exolon*. The theme was hardly new – mercenary is hired to rid a world of numerous beasties and unfriendly military installations using a powerful laser system and grenades for the more stubborn obstacles. But *Exolon*'s main assets lay in its very large, brightly coloured and highly detailed graphics and the smooth animation of its central character. And the gameplay was all you would expect from a lavishly presented piece of action software. The 125 screens also showed that there was more to *Exolon* than just pretty graphics.

It has always seemed strange to me that no-one had picked up Flash Gordon to turn him from celluloid hero to a pixellated one, but **M.A.D.** finally did it and obliged with the game. Sadly the result aped some of those features which are nostalgically regarded today with fondness in the films but which don't look so endearing in a computer game – such as a poor plot and dreadful effects. Divided into three sub-games, Flash dashed through jungles, beat up cave dwellers and showed off his prowess as a motorbike rider. The graphics were quite dreadful, and as one reviewer remarked, Flash looked somewhat like a deep-sea diver. A disappointing game that held few surprises in store for the player.
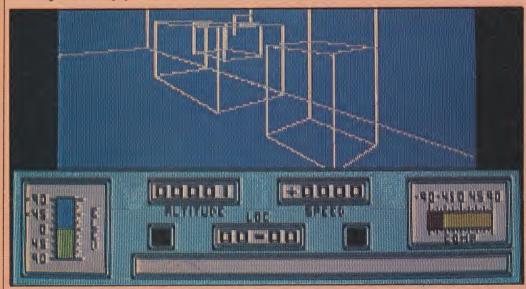
After many rumoured launches and subsequent delays, **Ocean** scored a Smash with the 128K version of a game based on James Clavell's best-selling novel *Tai-Pan*. Central to the plot was trader Dirk Struan who wanted little out of life other than a vast fortune and to be boss of a trading empire – its Tai-Pan. It was, not unsurprisingly, a trading game where you started with a £300,000 loan to be paid ▶

▶ Vitorc The Besuited battles through screen after screen of highly colourful and explosive action

► Cutting a swath through galactic history in *Mercenary*

back within three months. Trading games have a long and sometimes respectable Spectrum history, but they're usually let down by repetition. *Tai-Pan*'s action couldn't be described as high speed but the wealth of things to undertake, such as purchasing and crewing ships, risk taking and avoiding the depredations of pirates on the high seas, made it one of the most enjoyable games of the month.

Derek's adventure Smash for the month marked a return to form of Macmillan's software arm **Piranha**. *The Big Sleaze* was written by **Fergus McNeill** and it was a different approach for the writer renowned for his hilarious parodies of better known works such as *The Lord Of The Rings* (*Bored Of The Rings*). Cast as *film noir* private detective Sam Spillade you had to solve various cases that fell into your tawdry office. As with Fergus' earlier hits

it was the wit and humour perforating the text that made Derek give *The Big Sleaze* 93%.

Veteran 3-D Smashers **Realtime Software** released *Starfox*, their second game of the year, this time marketed by Ariolasoft offshoot **Reaktör**. Piloting the mighty craft Starfox, the player had to save the universe yet again from marauding aliens. It had many of the good points that made *Code Name Mat* and *Elite* such classics, and it deviated slightly from Realtime's shoot-'em-up format. Planets had to be located, mother ships docked with, enemies destroyed and numerous other tasks had to be carried out. A combination of filled-in graphics and vectors were used to represent the enemy ships. While both Mike and Robin thought it highly impressive, Ben was not so convinced. He labelled it 'unplayable' and brought the overall rating down to 77%.

The eggs grow very quickly in the energy rich tunnels and hatch into Larvae. These crawl through new tunnel sections and continue to feed until they split and form the fully adult Jellyfly.

► Flight is fast, death swift in Pete Cooke's *Micronaut One*

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US Gold's *Road Runner*, a conversion from the arcade game which was, in turn, based on the cartoon, failed to convince everyone. The game design wasn't entirely satisfactory – Road Runner hurtled along roads collecting seed chased by the infamous Wile E Coyote, while trucks, crevasses, boulders and exploding mines all barred his path to long life. Through a multiload system, US Gold tried to capture the cartoon's atmosphere with garish multicoloured graphics, but this led to the dreaded attribute problem rearing its ugly head once again, and together with complaints about the awkward character control, led to an overall rating of 73%.

The other big licence was **Domark**'s second attempt at a James Bond film, *The Living Daylights*. It was divided into several levels following the main action scenes from the film. In the game this took the form of several similar scrolling sectors where you killed baddies. The only thing that seemed to change were the sector backgrounds, giving an all round sense of disappointment. Poor on-screen presentation and slack gameplanning let down what was potentially a fine game.

As a refreshing change from coin-op conversions and tie-ins, **Pete Cooke** released his second hit of the year. *Micronaut One* represented two changes in direction for Pete, he had moved from CRL to **Nexus**, and after two *Tau Ceti* games, abandoned the formula to do a very fast wireframe 3-D tunnel game. At that, it might have been quite ordinary, but the underground network of tunnels were infested by an insect form with three distinct biological stages to their lives which added interest to the game. And of course there was the by now accepted intricacies of Pete's front end with multiple options, plus a racing game to improve the player's steering abilities. Rated at 92%, it reaffirmed Pete Cooke's position as a top programmer.

A pity as much couldn't be said for most other programs reviewed in the issue. **Ariolasoft**'s licensed *Challenge Of The Gobots* palled very quickly, **Ocean**'s attractive

looking *Mutants* turned out to be unaddictive, **Reaktör** had three disappointer sisters in *Killer Ring*, *Deadringer* and *Mountie Mick's Deathride* (such an obsession with death!), the much-heralded *Leviathan* from **English Software** flapped and then flopped, *Championship Baseball* made **Activision** look dull and even **Martech** slowed up with the interesting but sluggish *Catch 23*. At least **Virgin Games** stuck firmly with their collective tongue in cheek and amused us with (was it a licence?) *Trans-Atlantic Balloon Challenge*. The game couldn't possibly detract from adventurer-boss Richard Branson's brave exploit, because it was really too silly to be taken very seriously, and we couldn't resist giving it the very first (and probably last) CRASH Splash.
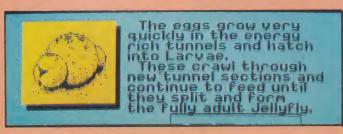
SEPTEMBER

IF CRASH had a Game Of The Month award it would undoubtedly have gone to **Novagen**'s *Mercenary*. Almost two years in the making, *Mercenary* must be the longest-awaited conversion ever. And the Spectrum coding by **David Aubrey-Jones** resulted in *Mercenary*'s fastest incarnation – a triumph for both programmer and machine. The player has crash-landed on the inhospitable planet Targ, and the essence of the game is to seek a craft to escape from Targ's gravitational well. It's to your benefit that war has raged on Targ between the Mechanoids and the Palyars for years, because to gain enough credits to buy a super ship you can be a freelance fighter for either side.

Novagen used vector graphics to represent structures above and below the planet's surface. And while the game featured exceptionally fast, smooth-moving graphics, it also mixed in puzzle-solving to give a sense of depth. The reviewers were united in their opinion of *Mercenary*, giving it an Overall rating of 96%.

Virgin Games's uneven record improved a touch with *Rebel*, another in the long line of bird's-eye-view scrolling games that characterised 1987. The graphics were attractively detailed, but *Rebel* split reviewers over the value of its content – Paul thought it hard, Ben unoriginal. It got 76%. **US Gold**'s attractive but strange-looking *Survivor* also split the reviewers, coming in at 70% Overall.

On the budget side, there was little to recommend though quite a lot of it, few of the games achieving more than 45% (the same could be said of the full-price games, to be fair). **Players** made a fine exception with *Joe Blade*, but even that caused controversy; Mike and Paul loved the game (90%) while Mark thought it only above-average at 65%. After a few nasty scenes involving a nerf ball and a Biro our exalted editor Roger Kean intervened with a cry of 'enerf's enerf' (I've been waiting to pull that joke for months) and an Overall rating of 84% was agreed. Playing the part of Joe Blade you explored the evil Crax

Bloodfinger's stronghold to rescue six world leaders, armed with disguises and a trusty machine gun. The cartoonesque but monochromatic graphics enhanced play, and it was agreed that *Joe Blade* had playability in second with *Stifflip & Co* – but it was, of course, a terrible error that apparently occurred in layout, and fortunately fooled no-one, for the game belonged to **Palace**. And a fine oddity it was too, featuring Viscount Stifflip and some friends including **Mike Woodroffe** (*Gremlins*) and **Teoman Irmak** (graphics for *Touchstones Of Rhiannon*), it played much like other, pricier Adventuresoft releases and Derek rated it at 84%.

But *Athena* reversed the traditional stereotyped roles of men and women, with the Goddess Of Wisdom herself wielding destructive weapons in a bid to clear six levels of nasties. Unhindered by stiletto heels and running mascara, Athena could do anything the typical male hero could.

For all that, in SNK's arcade game Athena is more Bambi than Rambo, and on the Spectrum screen she was more cute than killer; Ocean also undid their sexual-equality programme by portraying her on the packaging in male droolerama style. The gameplay closely resembled that of *Ghosts 'N Goblins* – Ben thought it unplayable but Ricky and Nick rated it an excellent conversion.
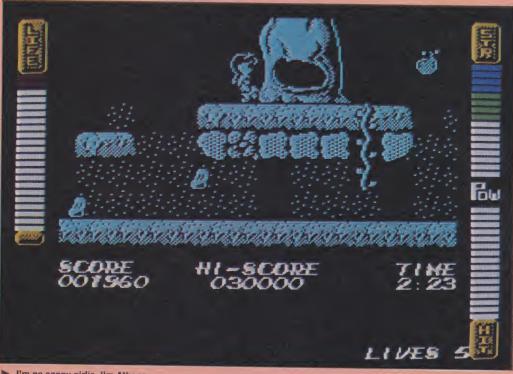
Wizball, on the other hand, was a different cauldron of frogs, for once uniting all the reviewers. For a start, its scenario was involving: Zark and his unpleasant horde had invaded Wizworld and bleached the once-colourful land, so the local wizard set out at once to paint the town red and annihilate the colour-blind swarm. A big hit on the Commodore 64 from **Sensible Software**, it was translated faithfully to the Spectrum. The graphics were very good, with lots of attention paid to detail such as the magnificent Mount Rushmore. And even the odd colour clash didn't stop it being Smashed.

The other two Smashes of the month were for the **Firebird** labels, one Gold and one Silver. *I, Ball 2* (Firebird Silver) was the follow-up to the equally Smashed *I, Ball*. Unusually for a follow-up, *I, Ball 2* was not derivative of its predecessor. It was a neatly-presented game but the real crux was its instant playability.

Bubble Bobble gave Firebird their Golden Smash. Though retailing at a higher price, the pretty coin-op conversion wasn't a complex game (just expensive in licence fees, no doubt). The conversion was competently carried out, and helpfully the coin-op graphics were already suitable for smaller home computers. Simple it may have been, but all the original's addictive qualities were retained.

Plexar was good too. The **M.A.D.** game had distinct echoes of Gremlin's *Trailblazer* – you controlled a ball bouncing along treacherous crystal roads. The playing area featured highly detailed monochromatic graphics, and the lack of colour in the playing area was cleverly disguised by colourful backgrounds. Again, it was a very simple idea but proved frustrating in the right way – just enough to keep you coming back for more.

As the year wore on, we were seeing more and more budget games, and they were better than ever before. **Hewson**, presumably reckoning that if you can't beat-'em-up, join up, launched their budget label **Rack-It** with *Draughts Genius* and *Ocean Conqueror*, and both performed reasonably well. *Draughts Genius* was a good implementation of the ancient game, but apart from offering a one-player-versus-computer option it didn't have

► I'm no soppy girlie, I'm Athena

abundance with enough thought required to keep the player returning to it time after time.

Odin had developed an ultrafast horizontal-scrolling routine which at one point they hoped might be used by Thalamus for a Spectrum conversion of Stavros Fasoulas's Commodore 64 hit *Delta*. In the event nothing happened on that front, but shortly afterwards **Firebird** put out Odin's *Sidewize*, which did bear more than a passing resemblance to *Delta*. Other magazines rated it quite highly, but it found less favour with CRASH at only 50% because the attack waves were all the same and predictable. And with **Quicksilva** going down the tubes, **Imagine** sliding disappointingly out with *Game Over* and even **Piranha** failing to impress much with **Don Priestley**'s *Flunky*, it was left to Ocean, Palace and Elite to score top arcade marks along with Novagen.

Continuing the spate of beat/maim/kick-'em-up-type games, **Ocean** served up *Renegade*, much to the gratification of certain bloodthirsty reviewers. Here was one of the very best street-fighting games of all, where you had to cross five landscapes to reach your lady love Lucy; the basic theme of each was to defeat muggers before they stretched you out. The graphics were detailed, marred only by the odd attribute problem. And there was certainly plenty of action, though perhaps home-computer entertainment needs a little more variation than games in the arcades.

In CRASH it looked like Novagen, not content with just one Smash in a month, had scored a

in an attempt to scupper Count Chameleon's dastardly plans for that last bastion of British hope and glory, the beloved cricket ball. By manipulating icons, you could control all four members of your team. Windowing techniques just like those in *The Fourth Protocol* showed the action, which programmers **Binary Design** had helped create. The presentation was polished and garnished with humour; plenty of puzzles and a second game on the cassette's B-side contributed to a great product.

Elite's contribution was *Batty*. Through the year there'd been a resurgence of the old Breakout-type games; we'd had *Arkanoid* from Imagine and *Krakout* from Gremlin Graphics, but *Batty* was the main selling point of Elite's *6-Pak Vol. 2* rather than a solus game, and is best described as an improved version of *Arkanoid*. Elite pushed the *Breakout* theme about as far as it could go, with beautiful presentation and simple but compelling gameplay. *Batty* went to show that good ideas never fade, they just get rewritten.

Derek's Smash of the month was a budget game from **The Power House**. *Custerds Quest*, a humorous adventure about the antics of Sir Coward de Custerd, may have been a cheapie but programmer **Craig Davies** sacrificed nothing and provided a first-rate game. Derek was also pleased with *Masters Of The Universe* from **US Gold**, who successfully made amends for earlier releasing the abominable arcade version of the same game, also based on the TV series. Programmed by a large group

THE month's most obvious feature was The CRASH Sampler precariously taped to the front cover, with demos such as the graphically breathtaking *Driller* from **Incentive** and **GO!**'s *Trantor – The Last Stormtrooper*. Christmas and The *PCW* Show loomed large, so many software houses were holding back on their latest products. Nevertheless the October issue contained its fair share of fine games.

Software Projects had been noticeably absent since *Dragon's Lair II* but *Hysteria* marked their return. Reminiscent of Ocean's *Cobra*, it failed to live up to the high standards set by the hit game despite well-defined, colourful graphics and reasonably compulsive gameplay. We felt *Hysteria* offered little long-term challenge. Perhaps the appeal of the beat-up-the-baddies genre was waning . . .

Ocean had two high-class games, *Athena* and *Wizball*. The industry watchwords were 'computer nasty' and 'sexism'. In September CRASH had reviewed *Soft And Cuddly* from **The Power House**, which unfortunately coincided with the Hungerford massacre and thus became associated with psychopathic violence, while for *Game Over* Imagine had pushed women about as far forward on packaging as the marketing men dared decently go, and the portrayal of women in derisory passive roles was being watched closely.

▶ With Freescape, you can see the stark 3-D scenes of *Driller* from any angle

much advantage over an ordinary draughts set. *Ocean Conqueror* got 77% for being an accurate submarine warfare simulation with 3-D periscope graphics and plenty to do once you'd got started.

TV cartoon series continued to spawn Spectrum tie-ins with **Gremlin Graphics**'s release of *MASK I* (possibly the first game to add the numerical suffix – they were already working on *MASK II*). Playing hero Matt Trakker you had to enter a time vortex and rescue your fellow MASK agents from the clutches of the VENOM organisation. It was a bird's-eye-view, multidirectionally-scrolling shoot-'em-up-cum-puzzle-solving game played across four different backdrops. Though small and monochromatic, the graphics were well-defined, and the gameplay was enjoyable enough, but the story line bore little resemblance to the TV series.

NOVEMBER

WE had 33 games to review – not so bad, perhaps a bit on the low side for the time of year, but what was disappointing was that few of them really grabbed the attention, only four getting over 75%.

The one Smash went straight, and without argument, to **Elite** for *Thundercats* – yet another tie-in with a TV cartoon series. But the accolade really went to **Gargoyle Games**, who wrote the game, firmly underlining their 1987 status as developers rather than as a software house involved in marketing and distribution. *Thundercats* was a frantically fast, horizontally scrolling slash-'em-up that made you want to get on to the next screen just to see what happened there – the prime quality of addictiveness. And if Lion-O rather resembled Gargoyle's older Celtic hero Cuchulainn, who cared? It was nice to see him back again.

Another TV cartoon tie-in flopped miserably for us, and that was **Virgin Games**'s *Action Force* by the ubiquitous **Gang Of Five**. Its neat concept was wrecked on the rocks of poor scrolling, unfair gameplay and mind-numbingly absent game. One suspected it had been rushed like mad into production without much playtesting.

Just missing the top by a few per cent, **Gremlin Graphics**'s rerun *Jack The Nipper II In Coconut Capers* proved again that the adage 'if you have a good formula then do it several times over' makes financial sense. The reviewers all agreed in their comments that this was a good sequel, with perhaps fewer puzzles to solve but more to see. Paul's only grudge was that the Nipper wasn't as naughty as before . . . strange, coming from an aspiring policeman.

From mid-1987 onward, **Code Masters** had been pushing like m.a.d. to make themselves the top budget house, with massive coverage in both computer and general media (including several national papers), much of it concentrating on the two youthful whiz-kid owners, **David Darling** and **Richard Darling**. By

November there was a touch of hysteria in the publicity machine's hype for the company's products and the young celebrities, characterised in so many headlines and captions as 'The Darlings Of The Industry'. In fact they had produced some very good budget titles, but everyone happily overlooked the fact that they also produced some terrible ones. November was no exception; of the four games, *Professional Ski Simulator* scored 79%, *Dizzy* received 78%, *ATV Simulator* scored 66% and *White Heat* got 17%, being described by Ben as ' . . . the most simplistic, primitive and dull game I've had the misfortune to play . . . '.

Professional Ski Simulator was regarded as an admirable attempt at recreating a difficult sport. Nick gave it 87%, but Robin Candy, who had developed an expensive taste for the sport and regarded payment for his CRASH writing as a 'slush fund looking for hard snow', gave it 71%. *Dizzy*, written by the **Oliver Twins** (made almost as adorable by the media as their bosses The Darlings), was a playable arcade adventure of sorts, but to a raucous bunch like the CRASH reviewers its cutesy appearance was something of a drawback.

US Gold, as themselves and as their new label **GO!**, disappointed, especially with the latter's *Trantor – The Last Stormtrooper*. Who could forget the graphics? They were tremendously exciting and it looked so atmospheric, but what happened to the game? Through its slick, glossy appearance *Trantor* received 68% from a grieving reviewing team.

And *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* and gloom fared a little worse. Ironically, Spectrum-owners enjoyed the best version of all (apart from the Atari ST's) because the inevitable monochrome graphics lent clarity to an otherwise muddled and confusing series of screens. Gameplay was poor too: three screens wasn't enough and they were too easy in one sense, being made hard only by frustrating factors such as pop-up thugs that killed you on the edge of the

screen.

Electric Dream also came a cropper with what should have been a great game, *Supersprint*, converted from the Atari coin-op. A few values carried over from the original earned it 58%, but the Spectrum implementation added nothing.

Even Derek, despite a dreadful dose of 3-D red-and-greenness he picked up on holiday, only managed a minor fit of enthusiasm with two adventures, one of which was a *GAC*-ed **Incentive** release, *Karyssia Queen Of Diamonds*; the other, a budget double bill from Tartan consisting of *The Prospector* and *The Crown Of Ramhotep*, was *Quilled*.

All in all, apart from some bright spots later in the month, it was a gloomy few weeks for software that left the Spectrum addicts feeling a bit like Indy – plunged in that temple of doom.

DECEMBER

FOR THE LAST month of the year, things picked up to give us two Smashes of great merit. First and foremost, 18 months of hard work paid off for **Incentive**'s new solid 3-D technique Freescape, and *Driller* – the first game to use the routines – proved to be among the all-time top-rated Smashes with 97%.

Flight simulations have always been a difficult area, and CRASH often accused of not understanding them enough to be able to review them sensibly. It's an unworthy accusation, though it's true they tend to have a limited appeal; not so *Gunship*, which received 92% and so earned **MicroProse** a Smash as one of the best-ever helicopter simulations.

And there were five other highly-rated and entertaining games. **US Gold** skated back on boards with the novel *720°*, **Digital Integration** gave us the very dangerous ice-sport simulation *Bobsleigh*, thrilling high-speed 3-D, **Hewson** showed with the unique rotating game *Nebulus* that the sudden loss to Telecomsoft of their long-

term program-developers Graftgold (a team which includes Steve Turner and Andrew Braybrook) couldn't deter them, and Mastertronic finally provided *U.C.M.* on the **M.A.D.** label.

Wrapping up last year's Lookback, I noted that at the very last **Code Masters** 'entered the budget arena with a pile of titles, which received a warm reception . . . '. And despite the occasional bug-ridden cheapie, it certainly has been the year when budget titles came of age, though often enough along the lines of 'might is right, or never mind the quality fill the length of shelf'.

The fear of full-price software houses such as Ocean – that a danger of budget games is their price relative to the shelf space they occupy – is still real.

One shelf-foot of full-price Ocean games earns the shop-keeper some five times what the same foot of budget games would. But if a shopkeeper has a few feet of budget games in there with his full-pricers, that drags down what he sees as the per-foot profitability of his whole computer-games section. Will he (or his counterpart, the executive at a high-street chain) decide it no longer makes economic sense to sell computer games AT ALL?

And then I still contend that the lack of advertisements from budget houses (which they simply can't afford out of the low profit they make on each game) does far more damage than merely denting magazines' revenues – it actually creates a lower level of awareness about computer games, and with a lower thrill factor, fewer people are interested and the whole market becomes depressed.

On the other hand, the growing strength of the 16-bit market is forcing 8-bit software to grow up as well, and one thing you can say of 1987 – some three years after it was firmly declared that the humble Spectrum had gone as far as it could – is that the barriers of what is possible have been pushed outward yet again, in many different ways but always to our benefit as games-players.

Already, I can see 1988 will be another interesting year . . .

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM

VOTE FOR THE BEST OF '87

READERS' AWARDS

BEST GAME
BEST PLATFORM GAME
BEST SHOOT-'EM-UP
BEST ARCADE ADVENTURE
BEST SIMULATION (excluding sports)
BEST SPORTS GAME
BEST ADVENTURE
BEST STRATEGY GAME
MOST IMAGINATIVE GAME
BEST GRAPHICS
BEST MUSIC
BEST SOFTWARE HOUSE
BEST UTILITY
BEST PERIPHERAL
BEST PBM GAME
MOST EFFECTIVE GAME ADVERTISEMENT
BEST GAME PACKAGING (box, instructions etc)
BEST GAME INLAY ART
WORST GAME
MOST OVERHYPED GAME
EASIEST GAME
MOST CHALLENGING GAME
MOST ACCURATE CRASH REVIEW
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Each year, the CRASH Readers' Awards are *your* chance to look
back at the best, the brightest and some of the others – and, through
your votes, tell the software industry what *you* think.

The results of this year's CRASH Readers' Awards will be
published in Issue 50, so please get your entry in by January 23 –
we'll need time to process the thousands of votes expected!

As last year, there'll be £20 worth of software and a CRASH T-shirt
(chosen from those advertised on page 166 of this issue) for the first
ten forms picked out of an old school prize cup on January 23.

Vote in as many categories as you can, and in the categories
where you vote for a particular game, please remember that the
game must have been reviewed in CRASH in Issues 36-48 inclusive
to qualify. (The review date can be checked in the CRASH Directory,
which starts on page 95.)
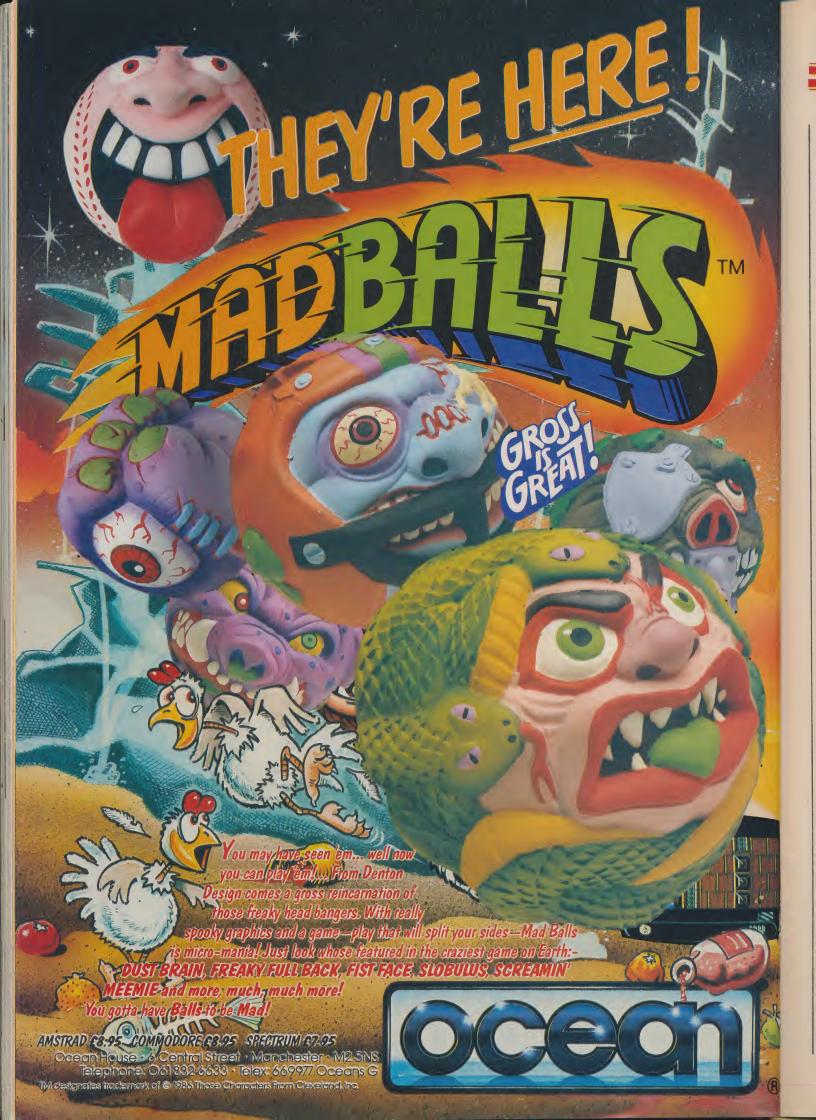
SLÁINE

Producer: Martech
Retail price: £8.99
Author: Creative Reality

Sláine, the psychopathic nice guy, is out with his faithful friend Ukko to lop a few heads from evil bodies in this licence based on the character from the comic *2000AD*. But the first striking feature of *Sláine* isn't the violent, pseudoancient saga – it's the control system REFLEX, developed by Creative Reality over six months and first used here.

DAVE

" To the nonplaying observer, Sláine looks dull; but the thoroughly mindless fighting is enjoyable to play! The graphics, are good, albeit unimportant, and though the scrolling of the instructions is annoying at first at least it keeps you on your toes. "

73%

The rough 'n' tough boy's actions, which are reported by onscreen text rather than shown in graphics, are determined by choosing from options in a 'mind frame' on the left side of the screen. Within this window a freely-moving severed hand is used as a selection cursor, selecting an action from Sláine's thoughts as they scroll across.

Martech hopes this REFLEX system, conceived after dissatisfaction with the atmosphere of the company's *Nemesis The Warlock 2000AD* licence (61% in Issue 40), has produced an interactive story that really captures the spirit of the comic character as Sláine and his companion move through their monstrous world.

▶ Can a fight be a fight without blood on the screen?

▶ Sláine's thoughts scroll through the 'mind frame' (left of screen) – and when the fight hots up, you'll have to quickly make a choice

land of Lyonesse (the country of Arthurian myth, supposedly submerged off Cornwall), the pair encounter evil in its purest form – the Drune Lords (*their powers are dark, their hearts are cold, the land is theirs*, the inlay tells us).

And when the fierce hand-to-

hand combat begins, options flow thick and fast through the mind screen – so very quick responses are necessary in this adventure. If you can get the cursor there accurately and in time, Sláine can throw a punch or aim a kick, and – if he carries one – swing an axe or throw it to cause horrific damage. (This, however, leaves Sláine unarmed and he must call Ukko to retrieve the weapon.) But while you waste time dithering and choosing, Sláine just keeps getting hit.

What Sláine can do is ultimately determined by his warp rating, a measure of his strength and power. In combat this can be reduced if opponents are too strong, but a successful fight, a period of rest, or the eating of food can push Sláine's rating to higher levels.

But if the warp rating reaches its maximum, the barbarian goes berserk, slaughtering all enemies that he encounters.

In a more cerebral vein, the muscular menace can manipulate objects that he finds on his travels, picking them up, dropping them, putting one inside the other, or using one upon another (inserting a key into a chest, for instance).

For all that, nothing but quick wits will get Sláine through his day intact.

MIKE

" Sláine **is probably the best adventure I've played. Detailed graphics and the REFLEX system keep it more interesting than the usual type-it-in style of text adventure.** "

73%

When they enter a new area, Sláine can look around, examining his fresh surroundings as a short description of the environment is given onscreen. (Before moving to some locations, though, Sláine has to perform specific actions.) As they progress through the

BEN

" Sláine **is the best 2000AD licence yet, but I am (again) unimpressed. Why oh why did Martech use REFLEX for such a brilliant subject? Perhaps the programmers thought** Sláine **would appeal to more people in a kind of limbo between adventure and arcade – but the control system falls between two stools. It makes a simple task, like going north or picking up an object, difficult and overcomplicated, and it would be more satisfying (and far quicker) to either type in an instruction or press a key.**

So Sláine **hasn't got the sophisticated command vocabulary of a good adventure; and it doesn't work as an arcade game either, because the fight sequences are boring and unimaginative without onscreen action. You're left with a flat, unatmospheric reflex test.**

There are good things in Sláine **too – the illustrative graphics are brilliant, and if you can ignore the input system you'll have fun. But it should have been so much better . . .** "

63%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: distinctive icons and attractive side panels create a strong atmosphere
Sound: spot effects
Options: definable keys
General rating: an enjoyable cross between adventure and reality

Presentation	81%
Graphics	71%
Playability	67%
Addictive qualities	67%
OVERALL	70%

Reviews

NIHILIST

Producer: Electric Dreams
Retail price: £9.95
Author: Shamid Ahmed

On a floating space platform dwells a race of droids. You are one of the low-life machines, ambitious to elevate your mechanical carcass to the high caste of the Omega Droids. Four of these almost invincible creatures already exist – but if you can become the fifth you can destroy them. (Why? Because you're nothing but a nihilist at heart!)

To become an Omega Droid you must destabilise seven ionisers by sucking them dry of their energy and using it for your own reserves. You can find clues (mostly suggesting you destroy everything in sight) in information terminals, and use teleports to transport yourself through the platform's superstructure and its system of air locks.

Movement in some areas is restricted by force fields, though these can be disabled with the right pass.

Fellow droids slide across the platform, and in this extraordinarily destructive scenario you either ram them or are rammed. There is a subtler, hands-off approach to weakening and destroying other droids: gather weapons from the several arsenals.

Once you're through a force field, you can acquire better weapon systems, vital to progress. Points are awarded for moving into new areas via a force field and for blasting out other droids.

Once all the platform's seven ionisers have been destabilised by your eponymous anarchist, you can enter the Meson Interruptor and destroy everything in sight – and that includes those four Omega Droids.

CRITICISM

● " At first I was quite happy with *Nihilist*; it's very like the

Commodore 64 *Paradroid*, which can only be a credit. And it's really easy to get started in – but that affects the addictivity. And indeed there's not much content to keep you going, despite the attractive presentation and graphics (which are a bit bright for extended periods of play). "
MIKE 49%

● " Nihilist **is uncannily similar to the old Commodore 64 hit Paradroid. But though it's playable, it fails to create any atmosphere to capture the player's imagination. Paradroid was a complex, highly addictive arcade adventure; Nihilist is a poor imitation. The monochromatic graphics have little detail, the scrolling is jerky and this bland, unattractive game is almost immediately forgettable. "**
ROBIN 47%

● " I suppose someone had to have a go at Paradroid on the Spectrum eventually. The idea of Nihilist is very simple, but it's spoiled by an awkward control method and eye-straining pixel-packed graphics. True, the smooth scrolling is quite an achievement considering the amount of memory being moved around. But scrolling and automatic doors and extra weapons don't make a game; there's very little content to keep anyone interested for more than five minutes. "
DOM 50%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: monochromatic; a bit too bright for comfort; but the scrolling is smooth (*two* reviewers felt!)
Sound: the odd whine and beep
General rating: unimpressive use of an old concept – an ambitious low-caste relative of the Commodore 64 *Paradroid*

Presentation	69%
Graphics	66%
Playability	54%
Addictive qualities	42%
OVERALL	49%

▶ *Nihilist*: **nothing to it**

STAR WARS

Producer: **Domark**
Retail price: **£9.95**
Authors: **Vektor Grafix, from an Atari coin-op**

Is the Force with *you*? It had better be if you're going to survive the waves of Empire tie-fighters and their deadly missiles, and then take a plug at the massive Deathstar. And, as in the megablockbuster *Star Wars* movie of 1977, the Deathstar must be destroyed if your rebel planet is not to be torn asunder.

You fly a small X-wing fighter. A force field surrounds it, giving protection against nine impacts from fireballs, and later collisions with laser towers and trench catwalks on the Deathstar's surface. But each strike reduces its shield strength.

An onboard laser, aimed with the cursor, is your own defence, and can take out enemy fighters, laser towers, bunkers, trench turrets and approaching fireballs, amassing points through destruction.

If you can deal with all the dark Empire's fighters and their missiles, you have to aim for the the Deathstar itself. There your X-wing must be steered between a

▶ Taking out an Empire tie-fighter

series of vertical laser towers, while countering yet more fireballs.

And you're *still* not home and dry and Mark Hamill. Yet more fireballs fill your forward view, and again these must be promptly blasted; shield-ripping barriers can completely destroy your craft. Survive these terrors and you can unleash a photon torpedo into the Deathstar's exhaust port (how predictable that its one vulnerable spot is difficult to get at). If you miss, you can circumnavigate the Deathstar to fire a second shot.

Complete this mission, and there's another, harder game — just like the film, if it's worth seeing once it's worth seeing 64 times. And Domark already has licences

for Atari's coin-ops of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*, the two cinema sequels to *Star Wars* – Spectrum versions are promised for 1988.

MIKE

" The Spectrum *Star Wars* isn't quite as good as the coin-op – or, come to that, some of the other *Star Wars*-like games such as Realtime's three-year-old Smash *Starstrike*. But it's not to be missed; the graphics are fast, though the lack of sound is a real loss, and the gameplay is excellent. The unfortunate thing is that it's too similar to *Starstrike*. "

90%

BYM

" So many pseudo*Star Wars* games are out now that the market must be close to saturation. Domark's official *Star Wars* conversion is an excellent copy of the arcade game and makes one or two graphical improvements on *Starstrike* – but if you've got the latter and not much cash, *Star Wars* may seem too similar to be worth buying. "

92%

▶ The Force is with you in the battle on the Deathstar

ROBIN

" Many a happy hour has been spent blasting away with the old arcade favourite when I should have been doing something more constructive. And Domark has reproduced the arcade game fairly faithfully for the Spectrum, right down to the character set. But the jerky graphics spoil it, and the in-game silence detracts from the atmosphere as well. True, it's very playable, but the cursor isn't self-centring – a major irritation – and there have been many shoot-'em-ups with more appeal and better presentation. Sadly, Domark's version of the once-great game offers too little too late. "

69%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: simple and effective vector graphics
Sound: famous *Star Wars* tune at beginning, but NO in-game sound
Options: definable keys, easy/medium/hard levels
General rating: a long-awaited official conversion that's very playable but improves little on *Starstrike* and others of the genre; still, two reviewers Smashed it

Presentation	82%
Graphics	84%
Playability	85%
Addictive qualities	79%
OVERALL	84%

JACKAL

Producer: **Konami**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Authors: **David Whitehouse, Stephen Lockley and Adrian Carless, from a Konami coin-op**

Those bounders have broken into our camp and caught us with our trousers down. Not only that, but they've also nabbed quite a few of our soldiers and are now holding them in a prisoner-of-war camp. Our boys must be rescued and Bob, Grey, Quint and Decker are just the chaps for the job.

The four set off for enemy territory in a tank. At first, they encounter only soldiers, whom they can take out with their own machine guns or by running them over. But the soldiers can shoot back too . . .

Soon your four good guys meet up with mightier opposition. Large gun emplacements work in unison, making it increasingly difficult to avoid fire from one gun without being hit by a second. Even this artillery can be taken out by the tank's weaponry, but only if you're prepared to take a chance — your range is limited.

On arriving at the enemy camp, the courageous quartet can blast their way through the outer gates and proceed to search for the prisoners, who are held in huts.

Other huts contain extra ammunition and weaponry, so the rescue team can build up a very vicious arsenal. But even with more and nastier weapons, it's a tough job — if you lose a life all the freed prisoners are imprisoned again.

After blasting down the walls of the prison huts and liberating the captured men, take them to helicopter pick-up points where they can escape.

And if you can manage the impossible, the fearless four can go on to attack the enemy headquarters. It's certainly a man's life in the army.

CRITICISM

● " Every time a plan-view game appears, I live in hope. But once again it's a disappointment — the

► *Jackal*: hide

frantic jiggerings of *Jackal*'s graphics really spoil it, the alternation of plan and side views of the tank is unrealistic, and the game itself is abysmal. The short range of your missiles means there's a very high risk of being shot in close encounters, so the game ends up brief and not very playable. "
BYM 61%

● " This could have been quite a smart Commando-type game, but presents no real challenge and requires no skill. It's just driving around a desert of disappointing graphics, and the only plus point is that it's fast-moving "
DAVE 59%

● " What a disappointment — the scrolling is jerky, the graphics are dismal and colour clashes all the time. Now and again you get a

smile from Jackal *because of the ways you can die — for instance, if you run into a little stick man with your tank you blow up! But there's no playability here.* "
NICK 20%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: simple, bad attribute problems
Sound: annoying tune and spot effects
Options: definable keys
General rating: a boring and bad-looking arcade conversion

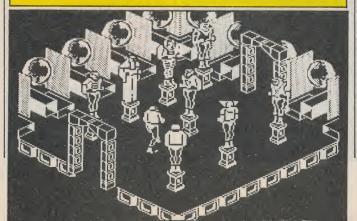|	
Presentation	38%
Graphics	42%
Playability	36%
Addictive qualities	43%
OVERALL	47%

PHANTOM CLUB

Producer: **Ocean**
Retail price: **£7.95**
Author: **Dusko Dimitrijevic**

Evil has swamped the Phantom Club, and all the members bar one have succumbed to the dreadful overlord Zarg. Plutus is the sole member of this exclusive group who is still a good boy — and to defeat the repulsive Zarg, Plutus must work his way up through the ranks of the Phantom Club, exploring the club's huge headquarters to build up his power.

NICK

" Phantom Club **is just like** M.O.V.I.E.**. That was the first full-price game I ever bought, but because I couldn't get very far it soon lost its appeal. And the same goes for** Phantom Club**. The 3-D graphics are confusing because so much detail has been crammed in, and the colour is a bit too bright. The nasties just get in the way without doing anything much apart from making a sword at the bottom of the screen (representing Plutus's strength) a bit shorter.** Phantom Club **is presented well, but holds nothing new or exciting.** "
56%

BYM

" Games like this have been coming off the production lines for three years, ever since Knight Lore. I'm bored with them. In Phantom Club just the choice of colours is enough to turn your stomach, and as for Plutus, the poor bloke can't do more than one thing at a time (even walking and turning corners simultaneously seems to be too much for him). The difficulties of manoeuvrability, combined with the endless chambers, make Phantom Club an infuriating and lengthy game. "
62%

But as Plutus roams through the 550-odd rooms, his former friends will use their powers to be as mischievous as possible. Some have taken the forms of monks, others are man spiders, and Plutus may need to spend several shots on them.

And the members of the Phantom Club are not the only hazards: some inanimate objects also drain our champion's energy, and to avoid them Plutus must use his athletic ability to the full.

A psychic bolt from Plutus's forehead will devastate anyone or anything that gets in his way. But it too uses energy.

Some rooms contain screens which tell you how to escape and get to the next level. Most of these require Plutus to shoot a particular object or character, such as Psi-Man, who has the power to block room exits. Psi-Man's power can only be overcome by destroying his astral projection, which takes the form of a bird.

Useful features can be acquired by touching the floating sphere (an extra life), the floating diamond (extra speed) and the spinning sphere (a large bonus score).

Yugoslavian programmer Dusko Dimitrijevic first came to fame with Imagine's *M.O.V.I.E.* (93% Overall in Issue 26), an arcade adventure set in New York's gangster world and presented in a similar 3-D style to *Phantom Club*.

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: monochromatic forced-perspective 3-D
Sound: spot effects
General rating: a disappointing 3-D cliché from the great programmer of *M.O.V.I.E.*

Presentation	60%
Graphics	63%
Playability	53%
Addictive qualities	51%
OVERALL	55%

RENTAKILL RITA

Producer: **Mastertronic**
Retail price: **£1.99**
Author: **Robin Thompson**

Ravishing Rentakill Rita is faced with the most difficult task of her cleaning career – to rid the ancestral pile Little Ditching of all its bugs and beasties.

But this mega Mrs Mopp will have to do more than swat a few insects with a rolled-up newspaper and flush them down the loo. The gigantic spiders and flies of Little Ditching call for different methods.

Rita can splat them with the crushing weight of a Rita lookalike, suspended from the ceiling – if she can solve the problems in bringing it downward with flattening force.
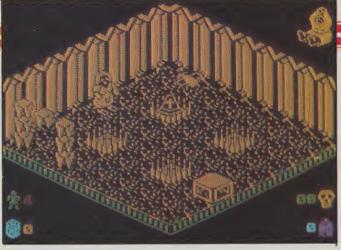
Alternatively, Rita can spray the spiders and flies with a deadly gas, but first she has to find the spray can.

Another problem is that the house isn't exactly a one up/one down Barrett starter home. One room leads to another, and many contain not a three-piece suite in a subtle purple Dralon, but hideous traps that can easily end the courageous cleaning lady's life: spikes spear her, electrified floors fry her, trundling balls mow her down and robots rub her out.

To get through these ruinous rooms Rita must work out ingenious methods, walking, jumping and using levitating and floating blocks.

Cans of food can also be collected by Rita to get her through the day – housework is a full-time job.

► *Rentakill Rita*: **good clean fun**

BYM

" At last a 3-D maze game with decent controls: none of this rotation stuff! A shame, then, that it is let down by a few problems. Killing the nasties is a precarious business which damages the playability considerably, and some screens are vicious to the eyes. Besides, this multitude of 3-D arcade games is really getting on my nerves . . . "

77%

PAUL

" Strange name, but nothing much strange about the game. It's Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes **without all the fun and excitement; and though the problems and graphics are very similar to** Head Over Heels **the 3-D presentation of** Rentakill Rita **is much harder to acclimatise to. Still, though the halo around Rita's body is annoying at first, the pixel-packed background makes this game look nearly as real as the genre ever will. The budget market is ideal for this kind of games – all the ideas have been used and nobody's expecting anything original. "**

69%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: monochromatic, the usual isometric 3-D
Options: definable keys
General rating: a derivative 3-D game good for a few plays

Presentation	67%
Graphics	67%
Playability	64%
Addictive qualities	64%
OVERALL	**73%**

ANARCHY

Producer: **Rack-It**
Retail price: **£2.99**
Authors: **Dominic Robinson, Michael Sentinella**

In Dominic Robinson's latest game, for Hewson's recently-launched budget label Rack-It, the CRASH-Smashing star programmer responsible for putting Uridium and Zynaps on the Spectrum sets the player a shoot-'em-up puzzle with a standard space scenario.

The planet Sentinel 4 has been overrun by rebels who must be suppressed. The only way to do it is by entering the rebels' security complex and destroying their weapons. So you drive an Interceptor unit equipped with cannon through the complex (shown in bird's-eye-view, changing screens horizontally), moving along the passageways created by structural blocks and cuboid weapon-containers.

The containers can easily be blasted – but if you get too close to them with the Interceptor it won't destroy them. And there's a time limit of two minutes for each of the 16 levels.

Deadly rebel security droids patrol each of the complex floors. At first they may be slow, but as more of the weapon-containers are destroyed and you reach higher levels, they become more aggressive and less predictable. The Interceptor's cannon can immobilise them, but the effect is only temporary. When immobilised the guards can be pushed around by your Interceptor's fire power, allowing you to clear narrow passageways that they block.

And every fifth building of the complex houses nuclear weapons; because of their importance, these levels are guarded by special security droids which remorselessly follow intruders.

► *Anarchy*: **tough to keep control**

BYM

" Anarchy **is an interesting shoot-'em-up with a touch of strategy. The graphics are simple but smooth and effective, despite some blockiness – and the gameplay is fun, with fast shooting action, spoiled only by having to start each life at the beginning of a level replenished with baddies. The replay mode shows programming initiative, though it's not much practical use, and** Anarchy **is a great buy. "**

82%

ROBIN

" Anarchy **reminds me slightly of the** Boulderdash **genre, but in fact it's a novel variation on the well-worn shoot-'em-up theme. Despite very average graphics it's an enjoyable game, with a simple but addictive idea playable from the word go! "**

70%

MIKE

" There's lots of fun to be had from this cute little puzzle game – the graphics are neat and well-coloured, and it's incredibly addictive. "

80%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: clear and colourful
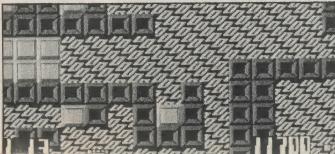**Sound:** good spot effects
Options: definable keys; two-player option; computer can replay the game for you to watch
General rating: a straightforward, addictive puzzle shoot-'em-up – as good as its Dominic Robinson pedigree

Presentation	72%
Graphics	68%
Playability	80%
Addictive qualities	78%
OVERALL	**77%**

CRASH HYPERMARKET

BACK NUMBERS
Don't miss out!

1984 ....

3 APR Sinclair talks to CRASH ● Stack Light Rifle ● Run It Again: *Missile Command* games ● CRASHtionnaire results ● the earliest surviving back number!!

4 MAY *The Quill* analysed ● the fabled ZX Microdrive appears ● Run It Again: *Pengo* games ● graphics utilities ● Living Guide: boardgames, simulations, strategy, adventure ● the second-earliest surviving back number!! *(that's enough early back numbers – Ed)*

1985 ....

17 JUN Denton Designs ● Sinclair Story 3 ● Maps: *Knight Lore, Underwurlde* ● Leonardo Graphics ● Datel sound sampler ● Artist: David Thorpe

18 JUL Gremlin Graphics profile ● Artist: Bob Wakelin ● Map: *Gyron Atrium*

19 AUG CRL profile ● Oliposter ● roundup of BASIC compilers ● Artist: Rich Shenfield ● Maps: *Dynamite Dan, Shadowfire*

20 SEP Electronic Pencil Company profile ● Maps: *Alien 8, Dun Darach*

21 OCT Holografix profile ● Holograms ● Map: *Nodes Of Yesod* ● Platinum Productions profile

22 NOV Fanzine File ● Microdrive tips ● Artist: Susan Rowe ● Fantasy Gamebooks

23 DEC Melbourne House ● Computer graphics ● Artist: Dave Beeson

24 XMAS 1985/6 Artist: Oliver Frey ● Gargoyle Games profile ● Lloyd's Lookback ● Hewson profile

1986 ....

25 FEB Durell profile ● Microsphere ● FORTH and extensions to ZX BASIC

26 MAR St Bride's profile ● Spectrum 128 ● Micronet 800 ● Multiface 1

27 APR Playing Tips supplement ● Mel Croucher ● Imagine profile ● PBM convention

28 MAY Fanzines ● Martech profile ● Composite Video Interface ● SpecDrum

29 JUN First PBM Mailbox ● Homegrown software ● Realtime profile ● Maps: *Cylu, Sir Fred, Saboteur, Tantalus*

30 JUL Birth of a game ● Laser Genius ● Maps: *Tantalus, Movie*

31 AUG Software Projects ● Word processing ● Maps: *Pentagram, Heavy On The Magick*

32 SEP Programmer: Dave Perry ● *GAC* ● Maps: *Core, Ghosts 'n' Goblins, Bobby Bearing* ● Echo Synthesizer

33 OCT Programmers: Jon Ritman, Costa Panayi ● Maps: *Dan Dare, Cauldron II* ● SpecDrumming

34 NOV Programmer: Don Priestley ● Genesis Update ● Maps: *Dynamite Dan II, Equinox, Universal Hero* ● Music Machine

35 DEC Designer: Dan Malone ● Computer Advertising ● Maps: *Glider Rider, Thrust, Lightforce* ● MIDI

36 XMAS 1986/87 Lloyd's Lookback ● Spectrum Music ● Maps: *Scooby Doo, Heartland, Druid*

1987 ....

37 FEB John Richardson: Jetman ● CRASH Reviewers revealed ● *Match Day* Challenge ● Maps: *Fairlight II, Firelord, Avenger, Dandy*

38 MAR Fanzines ● Designer: Bernie Drummond ● Maps: *Cobra, Impossaball, Uridium* ● MIDI

39 APR Arcades update ● The Z88 ● Programmer: Steve Taylor ● Maps: *Nosferatu, Double Take, Future Knight, Feud*

40 MAY Terminal Man returns ● Playing Tips Supplement ● Maps: *Short Circuit, Antiriad, Con-Quest, Into The Eagle's Nest, Sceptre Of Bagdad, Dragon's Lair II, Thrust II, Fat Worm Blows A Sparky, Tarzan, Aliens*

41 JUN Programmer: Mike Singleton ● Industry today ● Adventure Trail Supplement ● Maps: *Saboteur II, Head Over Heels* ● Multitrackers ● 128 bugs

42 JUL 16-page *OINK!* pull-out ● *Living Daylights* film FX ● Programmer: Pete Cooke ● Maps: *Auf Wiedersehen Monty, Hydrofool, Rasterscan*

43 AUG The +3 arrives ● Run It Again runs the *Gauntlet* clones ● Big trouble at *The Bug* ● CRASHtionnaire results ● CRL's *3D Gamemaker* ● Maps: *Enduro Racer, Flash Gordon*

44 SEP Programmer: David Aubrey-Jones on *Mercenary* ● The Sega Master System ● Is homegrown software healthy? ● Tech Tips: that Swift Disc ● Forum: *Barbarian* backlash continues ● The CRASH Challenge ● Maps: *Vampire, The Curse Of Sherwood* ● tips galore for *Killed Until Dead*

45 OCT Run It Again: the kick-'em-ups ● The CRASH History Part One ● In the arcades ● The budget BOOOOOOM ● How stars are born: selling your games ● On The Screen logo winners ● Maps: *Game Over, Wonder Boy*

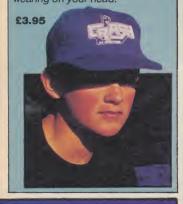**Issues 1, 2 and 5-16 now out of stock. SORRY!**

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SARACEN

Producer: Americana
Retail price: £2.99

Llan, a knight of the crusades, is out to destroy the infidel Saracens in the medieval Holy Land. But his knightly prowess is certain to be sorely tested, for many warriors block the path to the Saracens' evil chief, whom Llan must destroy to move to the next of 40 levels.

And Llan must work his way through a maze of brick and stone passages, magic doors and one-way entrances to find and kill the chief.

Llan's longbow is some help; arrows lie around the play area, and Llan can fire in the direction in which they point.

With these arrows, Llan can detonate packs of obstructing bombs, grenades, blast his way through brickwork and destroy the white crosses which open magic doors. And if there aren't enough arrows pointing in the appropriate direction, the medieval soldier can create some more by shooting an arrow marker.

Other doors require not such heavy-handed tactics, but keys which Llan can collect.

The progress of enemy soldiers – like coloured snowflakes rolling about the maze – can be stopped. If Llan takes careful aim and shoots at a spiral wall-maker, brickwork is instantly produced to immures the oncoming Saracen squaddies.

And to give Llan some brief respite from the tension, he can reach the relative tranquility of a safety zone, where he can't be touched by enemy soldiers or deadly bouncing cannonballs. Fair's fair, though (or, rather, Llan's fairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrn-drobwllllantysiliogogogoch), and Llan can't shoot arrows or pick up objects in the safety zones.

▶ *Saracen*: **shooting snowflakes in the desert**

CRITICISM

● " Another typical budget game: small, fast, jerky graphics, little gameplay. A few ideas in *Saracen*, such as picking up directional fire power, are great – but their brilliance is tarnished by the appalling graphics. The built-in antiboredom device is the option of starting on any level, but it doesn't take long to get bored with every screen there is. "
BYM 13%

● " *Saracen* **didn't really melt my joystick – in fact, it's dead boring, very simple with crummy graphics. There's only one real challenge – getting to the next level – and the gameplay consists of running around shooting weird-looking (hardly *Saracen*-like!) objects. "**
DAVE 16%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: poor
Options: start on any of 40 levels
General rating: hideous and uninteresting

Presentation	30%
Graphics	14%
Playability	09%
Addictive qualities	11%
OVERALL	15%

DEVIANTS

Producer: Players
Retail price: £1.99
Author: Colin Swinbourne

The deviants, a semihuman race left over from Earth's early occupation of a distant world, have stirred their angry bones. They start changing their asteroid home into a massive astral battle station and look to other worlds to conquer.

A crack squad of Starwarriors was sent to ensure that the deviants' plans are thwarted – but you are all that remain of that once bold band, and your last task is to prime the mechanisms of the 30 nuclear weapons that your fellow fighters have laid.

Moving from platform to platform, you run and jump your way past the deviants who patrol their base, visiting a recharging station when too much fighting has exhausted you. (You can also replenish your blaster's ammunition on some levels.)

Teleports at strategic points provide fast access to other sections of the asteroid base. But combat years ago has damaged them, so they're unreliable.

When contact is finally made with an unprogrammed nuclear device, six activator valves appear onscreen. To prime one of these bombs, every valve must be closed with six corresponding keys. The task is complicated, however, by the fact that the valves are interlinked – close one

PAUL

" I've been eagerly awaiting the next game from the programmer of *Joe Blade* – but I'm disappointed by *Deviants*. It's a pity Colin Swinbourne didn't try something a bit more adventurous than an extension of Virgin Games's *Dan Dare*, and *Deviants* has too many features of *Joe Blade* as well. The play area is very large and the graphics are many and varied, but still the game is disappointing. "
65%

and another may open. And a countdown shows how many seconds remain before the bomb self-destructs.

Programmer Colin Swinbourne's *Joe Blade* (also from Players) was found very playable and addictive a few months ago, earning 84% in Issue 44. The world loved it, too, and it sat at the top of the sales charts for more than a month.

▶ *Deviants*: **programmer Colin Swinbourne leaves the straight and narrow**

BYM

" Having to shoot these deviants more than once gets annoying, and their superior agility cramps your movement on every screen. And there's no information about how to set the bombs, which makes the game very short and pointless till you've found out how to do it. Dark, atmospheric, graphics are the only good point. "
67%

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: good
Options: definable keys
Sound: good tune and effects
General rating: limited gameplay, disappointing from the author of *Joe Blade*

Presentation	58%
Graphics	80%
Playability	63%
Addictive qualities	65%
OVERALL	66%

RIDING THE RAPIDS

Producer: Players
Retail price: **£1.99**
Authors: **Paul Griffiths and Andrew Severn**

Your bottom's just above the water line sitting in a canoe, so grab your paddle and get ready to go when the green light's on. The course record is your target in Players's simulation, and you've only got a handful of minutes to beat it.

You can choose from four courses – not simple little streams, but wild waters, full of hazards such as rocks, banks and islands. All these must be avoided and the canoe guided downstream through a series of gates, constructed of pairs of hanging posts.

▶ **But oh so slowly**

Catching one of these gates can impale you helplessly while others go on to beat the record – and, adding injury to insult, touching a gate pole or missing the gate entirely gives you penalty points.

And you can capsize if you're not careful; then frantic paddling in all directions is the only way to get out of a damp, damp situation.

But it's all too easy to use up your energy by strenuous paddling. Watch the clock at the side of the screen, but also keep a careful eye on your energy level. Good paddling!

CRITICISM

● '' *Riding The Rapids* is a well-presented little mover, but it's so simple and unrealistic it soon gets boring. The graphics are fine – very simple, but effective – but there's hardly any gameplay. The inlay promises the action 'will have your pulse racing as fast as the current', but if you leave your canoe it just drifts downstream, hardly creating the impression of a fast-moving mountain river. ''
MIKE **45%**

● " I've done plenty of canoeing, but never any like this. Never have I been grounded by poles hanging above the water, never have I been grounded by waves, and I certainly have never been able to dump the nose of my canoe three feet inland! Yet all these are hazards of canoeing, according to Riding The Rapids. The controls are confusing, too, with Q taking you down the screen and A taking you up – that is, if you can remember which way you are facing. Riding The Rapids is difficult and unrealistic, so give me the real river any day. "
BYM **65%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: well-defined, monochromatic, simple
Options: choice of four courses
General rating: watered-down gameplay in another 'simulation' right out of touch with reality (compare Top Ten Hits's *Grid Iron*)

Presentation	77%
Graphics	63%
Playability	55%
Addictive qualities	49%
OVERALL	**55%**

GRID IRON

Producer: Top Ten Hits
Retail price: **£1.99**

You've come a long way since managing the Wigan Wagglebottoms American football team. The USA called and now you are in great demand.

In your coach's bank balance you have a cool quarter-million bucks. With this mountain of greenbacks you can buy and sell players in an attempt to field the best team, beat the other clubs and win in that good ol' American sporting tradition, the Superbowl.

At the start of the game you can choose your level of coaching expertise, and the team you'll to propel to victory. But to improve the team and achieve your ambitions you have access to the

▶ *Grid Iron*: **football mismanaged**

transfer market.

You can call up financial statements showing your balance, the availability of loans and any loan repayments outstanding, and arrangements for making loan repayments appear before each match. There's also a list of available players can be called up, showing their value and skill and energy levels. And yet another list allows reserve players to substitute for playing members so that advantage can be taken of their enhanced energy or skill levels.

When a game is in progress on the field, the morale, skill and energy levels of both teams are shown and these are crucial in determining the outcome – though luck can play its part. The match is shown in 3-D, with both sides lining up on the gridiron.

At the end of the match other recent fixture results are shown, and these are further translated into league-table positions. A financial report then displays the gate money from that match, interest payment, the wage bill and your bank balance.

You can call up financial statements showing your balance, the availability of loans and any loan repayments outstanding, and arrangements for making loan repayments appear before each match. To measure your progress en route to the big time, a rating screen shows the total value of your squad, its morale, skill and energy levels, the team's league position and your rating as coach . . . because success depends on you.

CRITICISM

● '' I must admit to once being addicted to *Quarter Back* magazine, which deals entirely with the play of this contorted version of rugby – but *Grid Iron* deals entirely with the management side. There are plenty of chirpy features but plenty of problems too; for instance, you can't make more than one change in the team unless you've got an injured player. *Grid Iron* is enjoyable to sit down with for a long time, but I look forward to a game where you can really play American football. ''
BYM **73%**

● " Grid Iron is the worst sports game I have ever played. There is simply nothing to it but inaccuracy after inaccuracy. Players can do more or less

anything – you can get a team made up entirely of quarterbacks – which makes the simplistic game much too easy: if you manage to get a good team (hardly difficult) nothing can touch you. The financial aspect doesn't make sense either; I played the entire league, beating everyone by a huge margin, and still had a balance of about $100,000 without having taken any loans. I then won the Superbowl 28-0 (notice the way that your team and your opponents only score in multiples of seven, yet all the other games in the league have completely random scores . . .) and acquired an $80,000 debt. How? I don't know. But any money you invest in Grid Iron will be wasted. "
MIKE **06%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: none
Graphics: limited – Mike gave them 02%
General rating: a team-management game with the 'realistic' details so appallingly flawed it's worthless

Presentation	34%
Graphics	11%
Playability	47%
Addictive qualities	39%
OVERALL	**29%**

RICOCHET

▶ *Ricochet*: inferior *Breakout* clone of the week

Producer: Firebird Silver
Retail price: £1.99
Author: Lee Dowthwaite

It's a frightening problem from the very start – there are too many particles trying to cram into a universe which can't hold their ever-increasing bulk. It's a bit like trying to squeeze an elephant into a pair of trousers; something's going to give, and this time it's sure to be more than a zip. The bulk of the universe must not get any greater, or it'll be goodbye kind world in this zany *Breakout*-style game.

At the top of the screen are the rectangular surplus particles, arranged to form a WALL (Wacky Atomic Lethal Layer). By moving the BAT (the Bi-Atomic Tracker) horizontally and vertically, you can guide the circular Bi-Atomic Wall Loppers (BAWLs) which slide across the screen to the blocks above. When a surplus particle block is struck, it's destroyed and your score increases.

10,000 points give you an extra life (*just one measly extra life? - Man Ed*), and after clearing one screen you could need that life to take on the next – and a different configuration of particles – because the energy flux powering your BAT can be destroyed by repeated BAWL hits.
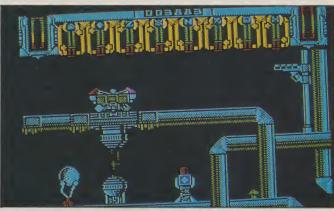
Extra weapons can be gathered by moving the BAT into the icons that glide horizontally across the screen. This way points, a double BAT and an extra BAWL can be acquired.

Try to save the universe if you can – we've all got something on next Sunday.

CRITICISM

● '' This could become a regular feature: reviews on this week's version of *Breakout*. And *Ricochet* could be the worst yet – the BAT doesn't even move fast enough to deflect the BAWLS! Vertical movement is only useful when a bonus item crawls across the screen, and even then it usually gets you into further trouble. ''
BYM **32%**

● '' *Ricochet* is rubbish, offering the player nothing that hasn't already been on the market in many forms. The game is slow, unplayable and unaddictive. ''
BEN **21%**

● '' *Ricochet* gets addictive after a while. The graphics are simple but effective and the sound FX aren't bad. And it's not just another Breakout *clone*, whatever the packaging suggests – the BAT can go up and down as well as left and right, the freedom of movement giving a more interesting game. ''
NICK **45%**

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Cursor, Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: *Breakout*-style, colour
Sound: spot FX
Options: definable keys
General rating: BAD (*Breakout* Awfully Done)

Presentation	51%
Graphics	46%
Playability	36%
Addictive qualities	32%
OVERALL	33%

AGENT X II

Producer: Mastertronic
Retail price: £1.99
Authors: Software Creations

Bothersome spots can spring up on even the finest skin, and that's just what the mad professor intends. Equipped with his awesome Zit-Ray, the loony don is out to ruin the faces of thousands of people with ineradicable acne. (He's slightly less ambitious than the mad professor of Mastertronic's original *Agent X* (85% Overall in Issue 37), who thought starting World War III would do fiendishly.)

Agent X is the only man who can stop this spotty caper. But to do that he must leave this planet, travel to the moon, and overcome the professor's traps to find the horrid old man himself.

With a jet pack strapped to his back, X takes a scroll across the surface of the moon, where wave after wave of attacking energy blobs and missiles come at him, sometimes fooling the unwary player by unpredictably changing direction.

But to defend himself against orbs and missiles, X carries a blaster. When he destroys an attack by a group of aliens, a capsule appears which increases the power of his blaster.

If our operative survives this mayhem, he finds himself in an underground environment of eight vertically-scrolling screens. Now X must leap from platform to platform gathering four floating parts of an electronic code. When he has the codes he needs, our agent inputs them into computer terminals.

That's all very well in principle; but some terrifying elephant-noses and energy globs are there to stop him, and there's only the blaster to rely on.

If our hero survives this hazard, he progresses to the next (it would probably be simpler to buy some cream at Boots). Here he must

▶ *Agent X II*: another mad professor, another poor sequel

MIKE
'' Despite decent graphics, Agent X II is a real disappointment after the fun and frolics of its predecessor. Still, the title screen is neat, with billions of different colours per attribute square, and the many tunes add something to a dull and unplayable game. ''
44%

manipulate a horizontally movable bat, using a ball to knock down the wall behind which the mad professor hides. (Otherwise everyone's skin will *Breakout*, we suppose.)
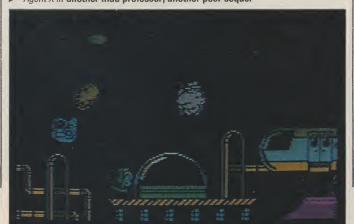
X's task is complicated by the deranged professor's own bat – which moves horizontally on a

NICK
'' Slick title screens and average graphics don't make a game. Here the graphics are detailed and the animation attractive, but colour clash is a problem. And there's very little to do in Agent X II – in parts very like Firebird's Sidewize (50% Issue 44) – so it's a disappointing follow-up. ''
56%

higher plane! But if he has energy and patience enough when all the bricks are destroyed, the mad professor can be defeated and everyone saves their face.

COMMENTS

Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair, Cursor
Graphics: colourful areas on all stages
Sound: superb tune on the first level, sampled title tune
Options: definable keys
General rating: a disappointing sequel, with each section derivative of a different style

Presentation	77%
Graphics	60%
Playability	50%
Addictive qualities	48%
OVERALL	56%

► *Star Pilot*: **shooting 'em up, while you wait**

STAR PILOT

Producer: Firebird Silver
Retail price: £1.99
Author: J Bond (sic)

After a tricky interview down at the careers office, you are finally accepted as a star pilot, with excellent prospects of becoming a legend of the space waves. And now it's the first big assignment – everyone turns to you when a few dozen alien spacecraft have to be destroyed, pronto.

BYM
" Despite a tiny play area, confusing graphics, and slow play, I love it! The graphics are well-designed, and the vertical scrolling is near perfection. The two-player, split-screen game style isn't original but works exceptionally well in Star Pilot. And don't think for one second that just because it's slow gonna be easy. Star Pilot is full of nasties, minds set on your blood, and it's an action-packed mission. "
93%

Your craft can nip left and right, accelerate and decelerate, manoeuvring to escape the attention of the bomb-laying space vehicles that flit over the surface of the alien space base ahead of you. Bomb launchers on the surface are lining you up in their sights, too . . .

Your skills are tested as you thread the craft around a series of deadly barriers and projections.

For protection, your ship is equipped with a forward-firing cannon and a limitless supply of ammunition, which can take out all opposition craft.

MIKE
" The graphics are dull and boring; the concept is simple and outdated; the two-player mode is very slow. Still, Star Pilot is reasonable as one-player shoot-'em-ups go, and worth a look if you're really desperate for a blast. "
52%

NICK
" This is too much a copy of Mirrorsoft's Moonstrike (77% Overall in Issue 45), and a flawed one at that: the play area is ridiculously small, and in two-player mode the whole game slows down to a snail's pace. Those faults apart, though, Star Pilot is pretty good. The alien graphics are quite effective, and there are some fantastic tunes and sound FX. "
50%

COMMENTS
Joysticks: Kempston
Graphics: mediocre
Sound: good tune
Options: definable keys; two can play at once
General rating: the sluggish two-player mode apart, *Star Pilot* is a decent, unremarkable shoot-'em-up. Bym's Smash rating dragged it up from the 50s.

Presentation	62%
Graphics	66%
Playability	64%
Addictive qualities	64%
OVERALL	65%

XANTHIUS

Producer: Players
Retail price: £1.99
Authors: Andy and
**   Martin Severn**

Once upon a time on the planet Xanthius, many atmosphere-processing (AP) plants were constructed by a crew of mechanoid navvies. But at eight of these plants the generators have developed faults, and in *Xanthius* you are sent to carry out essential repairs.

Ensconced in a spindly biped Protopod, you start working your way through the multifloored world where antigravity beams and automatic platform lifts connect levels.

Froth creepers and snuffling crustaceans occupy the pathways; some of this assorted crawling maggotry adds to the Protopod's energy, but some diminishes it.

And as the jerry-built generators fail, corrosive gases are formed that slowly decay the Protopod – with lethal consequences. Your Protopod's state of health is shown at the top of the screen.

To repair a generator, inject energy and wait for the protective outer weather shield to part. Then move the Protopod onto the generator's uncovered centre, where a read-out can be obtained. Once faults have been diagnosed, replacement parts can be called up from the spares division (and with labour costs that'll easily be 60 quid, guv). So stop leaning on your shovel, and get on with it.

PAUL
" The graphics in Xanthius just can't be faulted – they're smooth, colourful and well-detailed, making the game a delight to look at. The Protopod is a great graphic, very like Arachnus 4 from Amaurote. But there's no variety – meeting the same old meanies, over and over again, gets very boring. "
66%

► *Xanthius*: **the gasman cometh**

BEN
" Gosh, what pretty graphics! What a nice idea for a game! And great animation! Bit unoriginal, though. Mmmmm . . . the presentation isn't bad, nice scrolly message. Hang on, where's the game? Oh, there it is, not much to it, though, all you do is jump around and fix the thingies – it's a bit boring. And aren't those graphics a bit glitchy every now and then, too? Look – that ship's rather like the one in Amaurote. Doesn't move very realistically, though . . . what else is in this month? "
45%

Graphics programmer Martin Severn, much praised by the CRASH reviewers, has also done *Anfractuos* and *Joe Blade* (loading screen), and is working on *Riding The Rapids* (see this month's previews).

COMMENTS
Joysticks: Kempston, Sinclair
Graphics: large and colourful platforms with detailed characters
Sound: spot effects
General rating: great graphics but not much playability

Presentation	70%
Graphics	74%
Playability	55%
Addictive qualities	48%
OVERALL	60%

▶ Now he knows how you feel when a POKE won't work

WHO WINS DARE?

MIKE DUNN was vanquished in the CRASH Challenge two issues ago – but it's his turn to laugh when Playing Tips Editor Nick Roberts falls foul of a visiting champion in Dan Dare

THE SUN rose to meet a cold, overcast Saturday morning in Ludlow and decided to go back to bed, exactly as I did. But eventually I managed to surface, and, buffeted by the gale-force winds, struggled my way down the High Street and staggered into the Towers.

Out of the corner of my eye I glimpsed a mysterious figure in the shadows. **Paul Tregidgo** had arrived, all the way from Dudley in the West Midlands (and I had problems walking down the road to the office?). The eternal struggle between Good and Evil, CRASH writer and reader, was once again to be enacted, and two Spectrums had been prepared for the highlight of the day . . .

ROUND ONE

Two sweating, nervous, pro players sit hunched over their Spectrums (almost!), loaded and ready with their copies of Virgin Games's *Dan Dare* . . . and they're off!

Paul is the first to fall foul of the treens – after only 20 seconds, he loses ten minutes. Nick takes an early lead, collects an SDS key and survives a whole minute before getting thrown in the prison. Is there a win on the cards here?

Of course not. Nick, after losing 20 game minutes in a mere nine seconds of real time, slides in behind Paul, who cruises into the lead carrying 5425 points. But what's this? A mere 350 points on, Nick calmly zooms in from nowhere to take the lead. The battle is on.

The close fight continues, the lead going from one to the other constantly. Paul is the first to make 10000, with one hour 40 minutes still left. But Nick's 10000, just a minute behind in real time, is made with only 13 minutes on his game timer!

A quick session in prison, and Nick is out, with two minutes 45 left – and 50 seconds later, his third SDS key opens the door to the fourth level. Unfortunately, Paul is well on the way to his fourth SDS already.

And then it's all over. Nick's ego collapses at the same time as Dan Dare's energy, despite a fairly respectable 14050 on the score table.

However, Paul seems to be well in control, still with just under an hour and 20 minutes on the clock and a score of 15075. He plays on in the true style of a victor, the fourth key going in at one hour eight mintes and one second.

Suppressing his self-pity, Nick tries to create an impression of coolness by looking at his watch in a very impatient manner – but Paul stays calm in the face of at least five captures, getting the fifth SDS key in with eleven minutes left, and finally he's completed the game in 10 minutes and 45 seconds, with a pretty def score of 23325.

> **PAUL: 23325**
> **NICK: 14050**

ROUND TWO

Abiding by the rules of the Playing Standards Association, we swap the players around (just in case Nick's been POKEing one of the Spectrums) and bid them resume the slaughter . . . er . . . Challenge.

Taking the early lead again, Nick pushes out in front with a huge advantage of 600 points over Paul's total of 700.

Then, ahead by 20 seconds real time but ten minutes behind in the game, Nick gets the SDS key in. Paul is still technically ahead with one hour 58 minutes on the clock.

Nick struggles to keep up with Paul but fails dismally. The next SDS from Paul is in at 10175, Nick trailing, for a change, with 6200.

Nick's second SDS key goes in at exactly the same time as Paul's third, Nick getting past the 10000 mark with just over an hour left. Paul, with 14300 points and an hour and 42 minutes on the clock, again makes his lead clear.

Now Nick's third SDS is in with 50 minutes left. Paul matches him soon after with his fourth key, still with an hour and 17 minutes to complete the game in. And then . . .

"MERRY .. XMAS"

TO CREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE TREEN

VIRGIN GAMES's *Dan Dare*, the game of this month's Challenge, earned 92% Overall in CRASH Issue 32. The *Eagle* comic character was brought by The Gang Of Five into a brilliantly colourful, graphically intricate, action-packed multilevel Spectrum world of some 130 screens. (And if you can say that sentence without stopping for breath you're probably strong enough to play *Dan Dare*.)
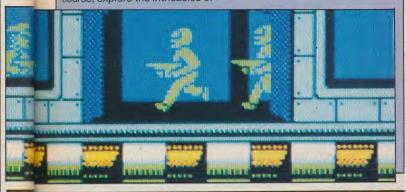
It's set on a rogue asteroid with which the fantastically evil little Mekon intends to destroy Earth. Our 'pilot of the future' must, of course, explore the intricacies of the asteroid's many rooms and lifts, avoid the Mekon's Treen guards and find 'SDS keys' to assemble the scattered parts of the complex's self-destruct mechanism. All the time there's a stopwatch ticking, and if Dan's knocked out by a Treen you lose minutes of game time – it's not a task for the Mekon mild.

It all sounds standard Sunday-afternoon stuff, but the superb colour and animation, the speed of gameplay and the nice touch of comic-strippish onscreen messages make *Dan Dare* one of the best tie-ins around.

▶ **No hard feelings**

DISASTER. Nick loses loads of time, and just manages the fourth SDS key before dying with 18925, an improvement on his last game.

Fighting back the tears, Nick looks up to see Paul miles ahead with 54 game minutes left, and 20125 points. Paul, a true hero, carries on again, and finally expires with 25775 points.

> **PAUL: 25775**
> **NICK: 18925**

And so Paul Tregidgo has won the *Dan Dare* Challenge, and all there's left to do is make excuses for yet another CRASH reviewer's fudging fingers (*and he a Playing Tips Ed too! – Man Ed*).

But a bit of good has come out of it. We all know how to beat Nick now: following Paul Tregidgo's example, we say Playing Tips is the best column in the magazine, and his ego swells so much he thinks he doesn't have to try to win the game! Easy!

Oh, and there's one last thing. Paul asked me to say hello to Marc Bunch, Neil Williamson, Owen Calahan, and Mark Marshallsay. (*Out of the question – Man Ed*)

WE'LL TRY OUR VERY HARDEST TO BEAT YOU IN THE NEXT

CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM
CHALLENGE

HONEST WE WILL!

But there's not much hope for us now. Robin Candy refuses to play a Challenge because it wouldn't fit in with his rock-star image, David Peters and Man Ed always manage to remember some urgent appointment whenever the subject is mentioned, Roger Kean is busy moving from mag to mag and Lloyd Mangram – well, we haven't dared ask.

There is, however, Ben Stone. And Ben has offered to play ANYONE in Elite's *Commando* for the next Challenge, which will take place early in the New Year and be reported in Issue 50.

Interested? Just fill in the form and rush it to **CRASH Challenge, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB***.

If your wish isn't our *Commando*, you can always choose another game – anything Smashed in 1987 (and, yes, we know *Commando* is two years old – but maintaining the honour of CRASH demands we bend the rules).

Dear Ben Stone

I challenge you to play *Commando* – and may the best man win!
(That'll be me, because I've already scored ....)

OR TAKE THE EASY WAY OUT AND TICK THIS BOX:

☐ I'm too much of a wimp to play Ben in *Commando*, but I'd still like my name put in the hat for a future Challenge – perhaps for *First Steps With The Mr Men*, please?

Well, no, really for ....

in which I've already scored ....

NAME ....
ADDRESS ....
....
.... POSTCODE ....
TELEPHONE NUMBER ....
AGE ....

If you're selected for the Challenge we'll pay your fare to Ludlow and home again, keep you warm and well-fed while you're here, and probably steal the shirt off your back too

TAKE ME TO YOUR LIEDER

JON BATES seeks words for his 128 carol – it's a chance to win a £25 record token plus a CRASH cap and T-shirt!

JUST to be different, we've set you a competition that demands real artistic skill – the feeling for music and words etc. All you have to do is think up a neat set of Christmassy words to fit this specially-composed tune (no star/far bright/night child/mild rhymes, please!); you can either play it from the score or run the program on a 128K Spectrum. If you have a 48K Spectrum you can follow the first part from 'MELODYA' to 'BREAKA'; if you want to miss out on the graphics merely enter lines 60 to 300 (shame on you, I spent ages trying to get them right – they took a lot longer than the music!).

The format could be chorus, verse (albeit quite short), chorus, but we'll accept any literary variations – so sharpen up yer pencils and put your best trochaic foots and iambic pentameters forward!

The best set of words selected by CRASH's appointed judges –

you know, the ones whose decision is always final – will win its author a £25 record token, a CRASH cap and T-shirt (state on your entry which one you'd like of all those advertised on pages 166-167) and poetic fame with the winning words printed in CRASH.

Send your Christmas verse to **FA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA COMP, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to arrive by February 1. Best of luck, and have a safe, happy Christmas and New Year; the Bates musical motel reopens for business as normal next month. (Send any Spectromusical questions or news to me at the same CRASH address, marked 'Tech Niche'.)

PS A big thank you to Greg and Neville Coss for entering the bulk of the program as I was hastily working it out and many thanks to Simon N Goodwin for print-outs and program editing.

Crash Competition

```
10   FLASH 0
20   BORDER 1: PAPER 1: INK 6
30   PRINT "Twinkle,Twinkle?"
40   FOR n=1 TO 50: GO SUB 340: NEXT n
50   PRINT AT 12,0;"INTRO STARTS NOW
     After a bit the main tune will start . . . that's
     when you start your words!!"
60   LET i$="!INTROA!M7T145UX1000W0
     05N3 Eabe"
70   LET d$="06eeeeeeee"
80   LET
     t$="!MELODYA!(V1105N6D#C5b6ag5#
     f6e#f5g9a6D#C5b6ag5#f6e#f5e9d)"
90   LET m$="!MID-
     DLEA!(V1305N5eg3#fed5e3g#fe5d)
     (V11N5$eg3f$ed5$e3gf$e5d)"
100  LET
     k$="!BREAKA!(UX1000W6N3#ED$Eg)"
110  LET j$="!INTROB!M7UX1000W0 05N9&&
     (3b#CD#Fb#CD#Fb#CD#F)"
120  LET e$="#C#C#CDDDbb"
130  LET u$="!MELODYB!(V905D#fa
     #Cgabg04AD#FGbD#
     FaEgb#FaDGbA#CEA#C
     EA#C05D#fa#Cgabg04AD#FGbD
     #FaEgb#FaDEg#faDgaDeD)"
140  LET
     n$="!MIDDLEB!(V1304N5CE3DCb5C3E
     DC5b)(V11N5C$E3DC$b5C3$EDC5b)"
150  LET
     l$="!BREAKB!(03N3C&8&3#5$a7$b3&)"
160  LET o$="!INTROC!M7UX1000W0
     05N9&&&&3gabDgabDgabDgabD"
170  LET s$="aAaAaAaA"
180  LET x$="!ENDA!04N9D"
190  LET
     v$="!MELODYC!(UX1000W003dDDd1D
     DDD3dD)"
200  LET y$="!ENDB!03N9D"
210  LET p$="!MIDDLEC!
     UX200W3N7ab6C5D3E)V13N7ccccccc"
220  LET z$="!ENDC!V1303N9d"
230  LET q$=
     "!BREAKC!(02N3C&8&3#5$a7$b3&)"
240  LET f$=i$+i$+i$ +i$+i$ +i$+i$ +i$+i$
     +i$+i$ +i$+d$ +d$+d$+d$
250  LET g$=j$+e$+e$+e$+e$
260  LET h$=o$+s$+s$+s$+s$
270  LET a$=f$+t$+m$+k$+k
     $+k$+k$+f$+t$+x$
280  LET b$=g$+u$+n$+l$+g $+u$+y$
290  LET c$=h$+v$+v$+v$+v
     $+v$+v$+v$+v$+ p$+q$+h$+v$+v
     $+v$+v$+v$+v$+ v$+v$+z$
300  PLAY a$, b$, c$
310  FLASH 1: FOR e = 1 TO 8: GO SUB 370:
     NEXT e
320  FLASH 0: PRINT "(C)Jon Bates 1987
     HAPPY NEW YEAR"
330  STOP
340  BEEP 0.01,RND*20
350  PRINT AT RND*9+1,RND*30+1;"*"
360  RETURN
370  PAPER RND*7: INK 9
380  LET l=RND*20
390  LET c=RND*16
400  PRINT AT l,c; "MERRY CHRISTMAS"
410  PAPER 4: INK 2
420  PRINT AT l+1,c; " FROM CRASH "
430  PLAY "T22005N3bD4g2a5b"
440  RETURN
```

CRUNCH

>START HERE<

Welcome to THE new look 'zine. We will take you way past the (so called) new dimension. May I first of all congratulate and thank you on your 'risky' purchase of our attempt at hitting the 'big time'.

The first thing to remember when reading Crunch (apart from the fact that it's not 'real') is that you CAN have YOUR say over what you would like in the mag. If you don't like something then say so. We're all sitting here ready to take constructive criticism (and praise - Miles) where it's due. I don't know about you but I'm a bit annoyed with all these so-called magazines who thrust their opinions on their readers - it really BUGS me. We're not concerned with some bloke leaving a company or Amstrad's latest compact ironing board - you obviously bought Crunch to read about computers and that's what we'll tell you about. Happy Christmas and interesting reading!

EDITORIAL ADVISOR
Rosebud Hawkins
EDITOR
Miles Knighton
FEATURES EDITOR
Jack Burton
STAFF WRITERS
Andres Whitham-Smythe
Jud Crunchbucket
DESIGN AND LAYABOUT
Bertie Brie

The whole of CRUNCH fanzine was constructed using Mirrorsoft's Fleet Street Editor Plus desktop publishing package, on the Amstrad PCW8256 computer. dumps on 8256 printer.
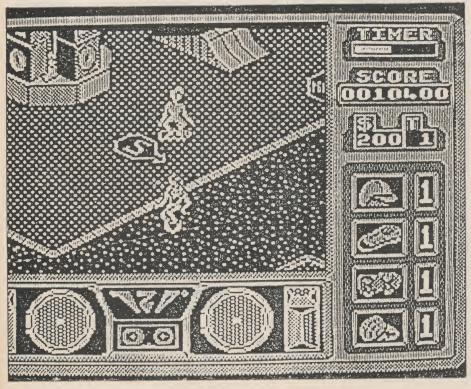
720 Degrees

Producer: US Gold

Price : £7. 99

GO SKATEBOARDING WITH US GOLD

FOR SOME inexplicable reason you are dumped in Skate City the toughest and meanest town around. All you have to do is survive the day to day activities of this active enviroment. You must fly around this obstacle ridden area to certain skate parks situated at the North, South, East and West points. On your way to gaining money and medals at the each of the four parks you may come across salesmen on the edge of the sidewalk. At each of these stalls you can purchase extra equipment to enhance your performance, using the money gained at skate ▶

parks. Extra money can be picked up on the streets around the town, and bonus money is given for each stunt performed. It's not all that easy though. After a short length of time a swarm of killer bees appears. To avoid these you must go to the nearest open park. Tickets to the parks are only gained once you have scored over a certain amount of points.

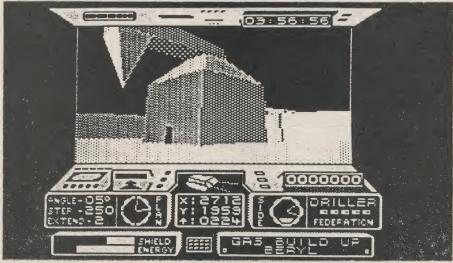Therefore if you don't perform enough tricks you don't get enough money, subsequently the bees get you! To add more of a challenge various characters are scattered around the place, ranging from cyclists to breakdancers. This is, without a doubt, one of US Gold's best games to date. The concept is so original and the gameplay so effective. Let's hope they keep it up.

Jack Burton

Tip: Use your time wisely. Do lots of stunts in the town till the swarm of bees arrive. Then enter the next park rapidly!

DRILLER

Producer: Incentive

Price : £14. 95

MORE DIMENSIONS THAN DOCTOR WHO'S TARDIS

THE NEW dimension has arrived! The much advertised and hyped Driller finally appears on the Spectrum, and what an innovative game it is. The main feature of Driller is the new graphics technique, Freescape tm. It has, apparently, taken over fourteen months to develop this revolutionary technique of producing (relatively) fast moving, solid and realistic objects. Freescape tm. allows you to see EVERY angle of EVERY object in the game. The first game to use Freescape tm. is Driller.

In this, almost demonstration, game you must travel around the moon, Mitra, looking for gas. Each of the areas you enter contains a variable percentage of the total gas of the moon. By placing a rig in the right point in the area you can extract the highest amountof gas possible, therefore gaining a greater bonus. All over the planet are various obstacles which must be overcome to enter the next area such as steps, lifts and sentries. Of course all these are very easy to pass if you happen to find and jump in the reconnaissance jet, but to place the rigs you must go back to the excavation probe. The packaging is lavish containing a 32 page novella, a mapping model and a brand new dimension.

Miles Knighton

TIP: Use the jet to map out Driller, plan your route, and then jump in the transporter for drilling.

-2-

Game Set & Match (Compilation)

Producer: Ocean

Price : £12.95 cass.
£17.95 disk

MORE SPORTS THAN GRANDSTAND

YOU MAY have thought Track And Field had a few sporting events in it, but wait till you hear what's in Ocean's little sports extravaganza. In this latest of compilations, the Manchester software house Ocean have got together what they believe are the most wanted sports simulations on the Spectrum not necessarily the best (as everyone's got Match Day, Match Point and Steve Davis Snooker). What we have here is ten games covering 22 different sporting activites. Here's a brief summary of what the four cassette package contains:

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL

Received rave reviews when released as the new Imagine's first game back in '85. Still one of the most playable games of its genre.

TENNIS

This upgraded Match Point contains most of the features of tennis, i.e. one or two player and doubles, but lacks the realistic feel and speed that Match Point did so well to convey.

JONAH BARRINGTON'S SQUASH

You could almost say this is the real thing. You even get the eponymous and controversial squash player speaking the scores for you using the revolutionary Reprosound technique. JB's Squash has got everything, apart from somewhere to warm your balls up!

POOL

Not really as realistic or as fun to play as Steve Davis Snooker, but fans of the classic American ball game will have something to amuse themselves with.

PIING PONG

Programmer supreme Jonathan Smith shows how to make one of the most enjoyable arcade games succeed on the Spectrum. Loads of options, and even some superb tunes to keep the excitement running at a tremendous pace.

HYPER SPORTS

This is the real Track And Field of the bunch. Guide Hyper Bill through all the events (swimming, skeet shooting, long horse, triple jump, weight lifting and archery) and prove yourself to be waggler supremo. One for all high score fans.

SUPER SOCCER

I'm surprised Ocean brought this bad egg into the basket. There's more bugs in it than in the Russian Embassy. Match Day II is on its way (see 'Watch Out') so I shouldn't even bother playing it.

BARRY MCGUIGAN BOXING

Yet another in the long line of successful boxing simulations on the Spectrum. There's the whole world to compete against to gain that elusive World Championship. You can even alter the characteristics of your man. Get a friend along to play and you can bash the hell out of each other.

BASKETBALL

Despite it's recent full price release only four months ago, it doesn't give any more than any other game on the court. You'd be much better off with the 1985 team game of World Series Basketball - visually and aurally much better.

DALEY THOMPSON'S SUPERTEST

The follow-up to DT's Decathlon didn't prove as popular, but provided a great variation of events and a strong challenge to the Epyx series. In Super-Test you get pistol shooting, cycling, spring board diving, giant slalom, rowing, penalties, ski jumping and tug o'war.

Game Set And Match is not just an ordinary compilation. I've no doubt that 'theme' compilations are the product of the future. Probably one of the best Christmas presents you could get. Buy it now, think of it as an investment.
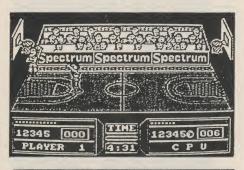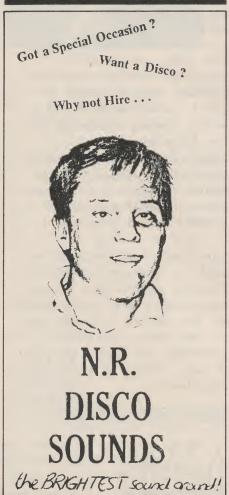
Andres Whitham-Smythe

WADING THROUGH THE OCEAN

Match That!

After over three years on the market Jon Ritman's fabled soccer game has finally met its match, itself. Yes the jovial Londoner, after much waiting, has finally come up with a follow-up worthy of

the name Match Day II. More options, more graphics and improved sound could push its predecessor Match Day off the top of the league. The old team are back together again; Ritman's written the code; Bernie Drummond has designed the cute wire-frame graphics and Jon's old friend (whose name could not be disclosed for fear of kidnapping) is back again with some jivey beats. It should be on the streets now!

Grrr! Urghh! Aaggh!

The fabulous arcade game Combat School will be out for your Spectrum in time for Christmas - so you can stop all that grunting and groaning. Ocean's big arcade reference is not a case of blowing up countless enemies; you must battle against the instructor and yourself to become strong and quick enough for graduation to your first mission, and then all the violence can start. Training consists of five main sections; the assault course, firing range, arm wrestling, iron man course and hand to hand combat. If you happen to fall a bit short of these tough standards then you are given the chance to reprieve yourself through a test of chin-ups. Combat School gives some monochrome and some colour packed stages - giving great value for money at only £7. 95 on cassette.

More than just a game!

Ocean jumped in quick to license the Academy Award winning film, Platoon. Ocean keep insisting this is NOT another shoot em up. They have tried to represent the film accurately with six different stages to complete and finally get out of the hell they call 'war'. The computer game will be released in conjunction with the RCA/Columbia video in early January.

Dunking without a digestive

After having little success with their ambitious basketball release of '85, World Series Basketball, Ocean are deciding to have another shot at the basket with the Dinamic programming team's Basket Master. This one-on-one simulator contains a two player option, slow motion close-up replay and cartoon style graphics. No doubt one to look for. . .

NEXT MUNF. . .

More reviews than you could imagine. Hopefully we'll be getting our hands on: -

Match Day II   Combat School
Basket Master   Nebulus
Deviants   Sidewalk
Slaine   Outrun

OF COURSE it all really depends on software houses' attitude towards us. There's a lot of fanzines around, so only the most professionally and efficiently run outfits will survive.

Also: - A new column called 'What's Bugging You?'. What's wrong with Amstrad's pricing policy? Are 16-bit machines worth buying now? We want YOUR views!

PLUS Expanded playing tips, expanded contents, expanded editorial, expanded reviews. . . (I think they get the message - Ed)

A SUPER QUIZ FOR SPORTSMEN

WIN A DESIGNER TRACKSUIT AND *BOBSLEIGH* FROM DIGITAL INTEGRATION

OK, so maybe nothing beats the chill of the wind and the thrill of the freezing fingers as you're coursing down the slopes of St Moritz in an Olympic bobsleigh – but we prefer to stay warm with Digital Integration's hair-raisingly hot simulation *Bobsleigh*, which (as every schoolboy knows) received 88% Overall last issue.

Now you can keep cool while you're keeping warm this winter with a **designer tracksuit** from **Digital Integration** (we haven't decided which designer yet, but rest assured it was designed and not made by accident in a sleeping-bag factory).

And you can chill out to the sizzling icy excitement (*that's enough overheated frigidity – Man Ed*) of *Bobsleigh* – there are 20 copies to give away to **runners-up**! (The tracksuit-winner gets one too, of course.)

Just answer these multiple-choice questions by circling the correct answer for each, fill in the form, cut it all out (as always, a photocopy is acceptable if you don't like disembowelling the magazine) and send it to **DASHING THROUGH THE SNOW WITH DIGITAL INTEGRATION COMP, CRASH, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB** to arrive by **February 1**. The decision of CRASH's appointed judges is final in all respects, but they're warm at heart.

► *Bobsleigh*: **test your knowledge of the real thing**

SPEED
090 KM/H

TIMING
01:05:50

SPLIT
00:45:40

RECORD
00:59:76

SUIT

BREUIL CERVINIA

BRAKE

Crash Competition

1 **When was four-man bobsleighing first featured in the Winter Olympics?**
   a) 1904
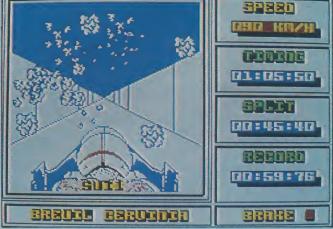   b) 1914
   c) 1924

2 **Which country won the four-man AND two-man world bobsleighing championships this year (1987!)?**
   a) Sweden
   b) Switzerland
   c) Swaziland

3 **In what year did British champs Tony Nash and Robin Dixon take the Olympic gold medal for bobsleighing – the only time the Brits have done it?**
   a) 1964
   b) 1968
   c) 1972

4 **Who is the top British bobsleigh driver who worked with Digital Integration on the game (and once beat Daley Thompson in the real-life decathlon)?**
   a) Nick Roberts
   b) Nick Nolte
   c) Nick Phipps

5 **Where will the February 1988 Winter Olympics be held?**
   a) Calgary, Canada
   b) Helsinki, Finland
   c) Innsbruck, Austria

6 **What is the official British bobsleighing body?**
   a) Bobsleigh Society Of Great Britain
   b) British Bobsleigh Association
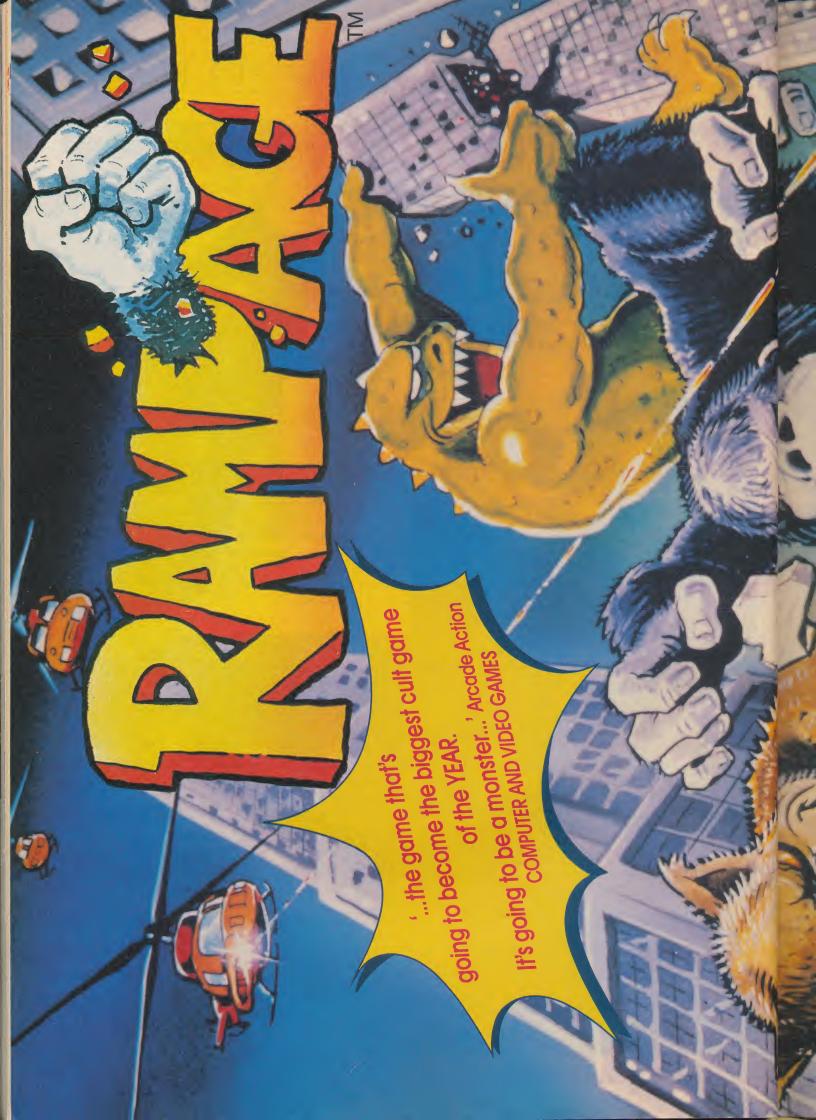   c) British Bobsleighing Corporation

7 **What is a bob skate?**
   a) an antiskid technique in bobsleighing
   b) a kind of fish
   c) a kind of skate

8 **Where would you find a bobstay?**
   a) on a boat
   b) on a corset
   c) on a bobsleigh

NAME ....

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of the YEAR. ' Arcade Action
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PREVIEW

Coming soon to a Spectrum near you!

GAMES OF '88

And the last of '87 — we analyse what's coming soon, what's delayed and what's just an idea

HEWSON looks set for a violent year – with game names like *Marauder* (ouch!), *Overkill* (zapppp!), *Thunderforce* (thwaccck!) and *Blitzkreig* (sic). And coming in January there's the compilation *Four Smash Hits*.

But probably Hewson's Spectrum biggie will be **Cybernoid**, a shoot-'em-up from *Exolon* author Raffaele Cecco. Promised for February, it features a weapon-packed ship plus plenty of narrow escapes.

Marauder's another straightforward shoot-'em-up – 'inevitably', says the software house's boss Andrew Hewson, reflecting on his vicious line-up – but Hewson also plans a fusion of shoot-'em-up and road-racer in . . . well, a game with no name yet.

Ariolasoft is adding to the plethora of labels with **Magicbytes** – and an impressive launch line-up. First off is **Clever & Smart**, a slapstick computer comedy packed with clues and problems, but things get darker after that.

Magicbytes's **Paranoia** (due for February release) is compared to George Orwell's novel *1984*. The world is controlled by a tyrannical, omniscient computer, and only by pretending to conform can you carry out your escape plan.

And the arcade/strategy scare-'em-up **Vampire's Empire** takes you into the death-imbued depths of Dracula's castle to destroy the vampire with light. Garlic, mirrors and clichés also figure prominently.

Mind you, Ariolasoft's *always* adding to the plethora of labels – just a few months ago **Reaktör** appeared with a fistful of releases and then disappeared. Now **Reaktör**'s melting down with excitement over **Out Of This World**, 15 levels of alien-blasting.

Mirrorsoft's keeping its feet on the ground and gets off to an old-fashioned start with **Andy Capp**, the official licensed version of the long-running comic strip (as seen in *The Daily Mirror*, a corporate relative of Mirrorsoft . . .).

All the Northern nuances of superskiver Andy's comic-page character appear in the arcade adventure – from chancing your last quid at the bookie's to scrounging from long-suffering Flo. *Andy Capp* is out mid-December on Spectrum cassette and +3 disk, and there's a competition in the December 28 *Daily Mirror* to win the original packaging artwork drawn by the character's creator Reg Smythe.

From Ormskirk to Omsk . . . in January comes the infuriatingly difficult puzzle test of nerves and coordination **Tetris**, programmed in the Soviet Union.

Denton Designs (*Frankie Goes To Hollywood*, *The Great Escape*) go to Mirrorsoft for **Fox Fights Back**. So far just an idea, it's the first fox-hunting game we've heard of but guaranteed to stir the violence-in-games lobby.

And then there's **Dark Castle** by the American design company 360, which Mirrorsoft spokesperson Pat Bitton calls 'super whizz-bang' on 16-bit.

So that's already half of Mirrorsoft's release schedule for 1988 – six to eight games, says Bitton, 'more than this year but we haven't been terribly active this year. We're going to be hyperactive next year.'

Konami continues to put its coin-ops on the Spectrum (at least, those which Ocean doesn't; must be an ekonami of scale) – coming soon are **Iron Horse**, a fast-moving, fast-shooting Western game set on a train, and **Salamander**, hyped by Konami as 'the *Nemesis* sequel'.

US Gold's big arcade conversion is **Out Run**, with five courses of Ferrari road-racing straight from Sega's famous hydraulic coin-op. Hills and hurtling trucks are added to the usual perils of driving games; *Enduro Racer* will seem like a Sunday afternoon in the country after this.

Gauntlet II, sequel to the top-selling Issue 37 Smash, adds new creatures, dangers, magic powers and bitter battles to the much-cloned original in over 100 levels of mazes. **World Class**

▶ *US Gold's* Out Run: **giving** Enduro Racer **a run for your money?**

▶ *Clever & Smart*: **comedy launches Ariolasoft's Magicbytes label**

Leaderboard is an update, too – of the more sedate golfing sim *Leaderboard* released earlier this year.

But US Gold's champion sports package is **California Games**, on the **Epyx** label – six simulations from the coolest state including frisbee-throwing, roller skating, BMX bike racing, foot bagging (keeping a bean bag up in the air without using arms – sounds silly when you spell it out), skateboarding and of course surfing.

And from the US Gold-owned label 'GO! there's **Bravestarr**, set a little to the east and a lot into the future – a Wild West-style superhero's bizarre crusade through the planet of New Texas.

Also from GO! comes Capcom coin-op conversion **Sidearms**, an orgy of waggling, shooting and vivid graphics, as well as **Wizard Warz**, a fantasy role-playing game going heavy on the graphics as well as complex spells and character traits. You're running for Chief Wizard – and in *Wizard Warz* campaigning means magically sending all other contenders to the back

benches.

GO!'s **Captain America In The Doom Tube Of Dr Megalomann**, a licence of the Marvel Comics character. Yes, it's time to save the world again – riding the eponymous superhero's sky cycle and battling through the self-epicentred Dr Megalomann's underground headquarters to find a nuclear missile.

What of the Activision stable? Well, from **Electric Dreams** there's a strong opponent for US Gold's *Out Run* in **Super Hang-On**, a Sega coin-op conversion with 18 levels and four tunes.

We're not supposed to call **System 3**'s *IK+* a sequel – but it's an enlarged version of the two-year-old *International Karate*, adding a third fighter and new kicks.

It's back to true sportsmanship for programmer Kevin Toms's classic team-management simulation – **Prism**

promises **Football Manager II** – and onto the track for our ex-favourite racing star in **Nigel Mansell's Grand Prix** from **Martech**.

It's been held back while Martech negotiated a distribution deal with aspiring American biggie **Electronic Arts**; EA admits that after early hype prompted by its massive *PCW* Show presence things have gone rather slowly, and adding Martech's ten-odd games a year to its catalogue may help persuade small retailers it's worth dealing with the iconoclastic company.

EA's own Spectrum plans as outlined by President Trip Hawkins in a CRASH interview – everything from *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Simulator* to *Mini-Putt* – may have been rash promises, because there's no sign of a single title. Still, the company says growing pains are over.

(Will EA sign yet another label to swell its distribution package, which

also includes CRL and Nexus? No, say officials – but then they said that before the Martech deal.)

Finally, there's a unusual combat game from **Piranha** – unusual because it's not cute and it's not a licence. **Gunboat** sends you on a high-tech

search-and-destroy mission against enemy submarines.

And, yes, we're *still* waiting for Piranha to finish **Judge Death** – dealing with programmers in Budapest is taking longer than expected.

▶ Konami's *Salamander*: 'the *Nemesis* sequel'

▶ *Denizen* from Players: space action with Jabba McGut

MORE FROM THE BUDGET BOOM

TALK ABOUT walking the plank – whoever thought of calling Software Publishing Associates' new budget label **Pirate**?

But it's got a massive line-up including **Apache Raid**, **Collywobbles**, **Vice Versa**, the addictive little *Cosmic Kanga* arcade clone **Murphy**, and **Knightfall**.

And that's just the beginning. Later in December come **Dusty Droid & The Garbage Gobblers** (these sound like cutesy titles from 1983 . . .), **Gang Plank** and **Keller**, and then in January Pirate pushes off **Marine Academy** (for those who flunked *Combat School*), **O.K. Yah!** and **Tenet**.

No sign of anything more on Pirate's full-price sister label, **Crysys**, though – the first Crysys game, *Erik: Phantom Of The Opera*, is reviewed this issue.

Hewson's £2.99 **Rack-It** label promises **Overkill** for early January – it sounds like standard penetrate-the-security-complex-and-disable-the-weapons stuff – and two more for later in the year. **Thunderforce** throws you in a dungeon a hundred years hence (well, 99 years hence by the time it's released) and pits you against violent, ruthless guards; in **Blitzkreig** you shoot 'em up from a tank and helicopter.

Everything on the Rack-It label will be available for the Spectrum, says eponymous Andrew Hewson, because 'it's much easier to do budget conversions than full-price ones'.

Brace yourself for an onslaught of *Grand Prix* budget titles – hot on the tires of Code Masters's successful *Grand Prix Simulator* comes **Grand Prix Tennis** from **M.A.D.**. (They know a good racket when they see one.)

Also on the M.A.D. list is **Energy Warrior**, and out on **Mastertronic**'s multifarious other labels are **Knightshade** (lively!) on **Ricochet** and a host of rereleases.

US Gold's **Kung Fu Master** (18 months old) is now out on **Americana**, and Mirrorsoft's **Action Reflex** (the same age) is on Ricochet alongside Ultimate's three-year-old classic Smashes **Knight Lore** and **Alien 8**.

And from **Players** there's **Denizen**, a space action cliché (with a baddie called Jabba McGut!) from the programmers of *Riding The Rapids* (reviewed on page 168).

Players also has a few more £6.95 two-game **Zap Paks** crashing onto the Spectrum +3. *Joe Blade* and *Xanthius* are already out on a single disk; a set of *Dizzy Dice* and *Riding The Rapids* is set for December, along with another of *Cybernation* and *Supernova*. The packs also include demos of Players games as yet unplayed.

GREMLIN SPORTS

GREMLIN GRAPHICS is set on sports this Christmas – with a line-up including **Tour De Force**, **Gary Lineker's Superstar Soccer** and **Alternative World Games**.

Tour De Force gives the power to your thighs in a hectic, hazard-packed race through five countries.

Gary Lineker's Superstar Soccer combines management and midfield; you start the game as manager of a washed-out no-hope team (name your favourite) and steer it through nine seasons and four divisions against 63 competitors.

Trade players and coach the team – by choosing one of a half-dozen offensive and defensive strategies – and then control the centre forward during the match. The computer manages your goalie, as well as the opposing team if you go for one-player mode.

Superstriker Lineker's connection with the game is a bit tenuous – it's more about management than the nitty-gritty of the field – but hey, it makes a good poster. (And a good board game – Gremlin, diversifying, expects to sell over 150,000 of its first board game, *Gary Lineker Footballer Of The Year*.)

The first parody of those deadly serious macho sports packages like Ocean's *California Games* has arrived – Gremlin's *Alternative World Games* features sack-racing, boot-throwing, pole-climbing and wall climbing. Silly graphics and absurd music add to the fun.

But just in case we think Gremlin's all sweetness and light, there's also **Blood Valley**. 'The smell of blood is in the air,' the publicity told us, and we preferred to read no further. Injuries in the second half are about all we can take.

THOSE CRAZY TIE-INS

RAPIDLY running out of obvious licences (though nobody's done a *GAC*'d *Macbeth* yet), the software houses turn to the dregs of culture for their tie-ins.

Contrived licence of the year must be *Droids* from **M.A.D.** – rather vaguely described as an 'exciting phenomenon', it's based on the irritatingly cute robots R2D2 and C3PO from *Star Wars*.

Superior Software must be feeling silly, too. There's a big licence coming from Superior 'before Easter' – *All Because*, based on the TV ads for Cadbury's Milk Tray chocolates!

The ads, which some newborn babies won't have seen, show a superheroic actor going through incredible adventures to reach his lady love and hand her the chocolates – 'and all,' the final line says, 'because the lady loves Milk Tray'.

So in Superior's licence there are five subgames based on the ads: skiing, hang-gliding, exploring a desert, subaqua diving and motorcycle-leaping across the Grand Canyon. We love it.

More plausibly, from **Activision** comes *Knightmare*, an arcade adventure riddled with riddles. It's licensed from the Anglia TV/ITV network role-playing game show which mixes live action and computer-controlled graphics.

Also from Activision, *Predator* – based on the skin-ripping new Arnold Schwarzenegger/20th Century Fox movie which mixes live action with dead action. Game follows film closely, with the player fighting through a Latin American jungle to repel the eponymous alien.

Still in the jungle, **Cascade** has the licence for Paul Hardcastle's h-h-h-h-hit song *19*. Publicity makes a thin pretence of exploring the angst of an antiwar generation, but there are those who think it sounds like *Combat School*.

Still in the jungle, **Piranha** has *Roy Of The Rovers* coming soon – in which connection, incidentally, we have been asked to point out that the Melchester champion is real and not a fictitious character as imputed by John Minson in CRASH. Honest.

Finally, a handful of licences *someone* had to buy.

US Gold has acquired official licences to Charlie Chaplin, James Dean and Marilyn Monroe and plans to release *The Seven Year Gold Rush Without A Cause* across all formats. No, seriously, there is a Chaplin make-a-movie (shoot-'em-up?) game in the works, but Dean and Monroe are probably best left to memory and postcards.

And **Argus Press Software** (see article in this section) is working not only on another *Flintstones* game (Wilma vs Fred; you play Fred or Barney) but also on the game of a comic which nobody's allowed to identify.

Still, we're sure that as it whizzers through your Spectrum's chips you'll have a dandy beano of a time. Judy, Mandy, Debbie and Buster did with a demo copy; topper the range, they found it, a right little plum, but it'd be pippin those old beezers at Argus if we mentioned the name.

MEN OF DESTINY

DESTINY SOFTWARE is launched this New Year with two Spectrum titles.

Teladon is, the producer claims, a technical record-breaker for the Spectrum – two completely different environments load at one go: The first half of the game by Nick Eatock (*Greyfell, Sorderon's Shadow*) takes you fighting through a 3-D valley on a hover-bike; the second is an isometric-3-D shoot-'em-up which calls for lots of map-making.

Also from Destiny comes *Yeti*, an arcade adventure set in Tibet's Himalayan mountains. It's a search for the legendary and genuinely eponymous abominable snowman, of course, but you're up against the Dalai Lama's protective disciples. The north face of Everest sounds easier than this challenge from Cybadyne – the team behind Ace's *Xecutor*, which includes Christian Urquhart (*Daley Thompson's Decathlon*).

▶ **Ex-Starlighter Francis Lee: launching full-price Destiny Software**

ARGUS RENAMED IN MASSIVE CHANGE

ARGUS PRESS SOFTWARE has been bought by its Managing Director Stephen Hall from Argus Press Group, the newspaper-publishing group which launched Argus Press Software and its labels Quicksilva, Bug Byte, Mind Games and Lothlorien.

Hall now owns all the software house's shares and will rename it Grand Slam Entertainment.

1988 releases will include *Peter Beardsley's Football Game* (a playing simulation), *The Football Association/England Team Game*, and a *Grange Hill* arcade game following on from Argus's successful licensed version of the TV series earlier this year.

Coming even sooner are *The Hunt For Red October*, based on Tom Clancy's best-selling submarine novel; *Pac-Land*, the return of Pacman in an Atari/Namco coin-op conversion;; and arcade adventure *Terramex*.

ELITE TO LAUNCH BUDGET LABEL

ELITE is to launch a new budget label after Easter, despite the closure of its £2.99 Classics range a year ago. The company says it has about 100 full-price titles ripe for rerelease.

▶ **Code Masters wunderkind Richard Darling (left) and David Darling (right): much-hyped by pictures like this**

IS CODE MASTERS GETTING IT RIGHT?

NO SOFTWARE HOUSE is quite as noisily blatant in its self-promotion as Code Masters – yet nothing in the software industry has had as much media coverage as the image-conscious budget house, now trying to improve its product too.

From *Options* to the *Financial Times*, *Today* to style mag *i-D* to *Media Week*, Code Masters and its two young bosses (20, 21) have been touted as the country's most successful, dynamic, go-ahead, just plain lovable software producers.

Spectrum-owners have known the truth behind this for some time, and Code Masters has acquired a reputation for £1.99 games worth that at most. They're nice little earners, mind you; nearly all make the top-ten sales charts, and Code Masters claims to be the biggest-selling software house in Britain, having doubled its share of the budget market from 6.3% to 12.8% between August and October.
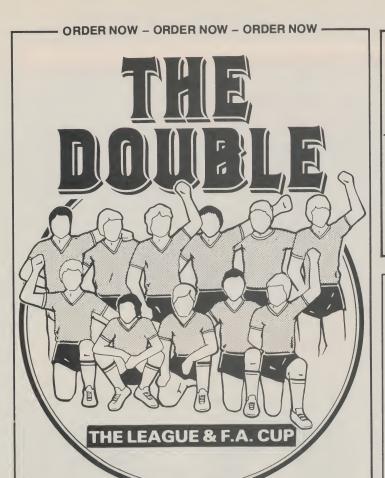
And now the quality of releases like *Professional Ski Simulator* and *Dizzy* (both high 70s in CRASH) shows Code Masters is aiming in a new direction – up. The **Code Masters Plus** range will feature £4.99 games spread over two cassettes. One cassette contains the straightforward game (as available in the £1.99 range) plus a more difficult version; the second cassette has extra levels.

First out on the new label is *Jet Bike Simulator* by the Oliver twins, Philip and Andrew, whose work (including *Dizzy*, *Ski Simulator* and the less well-reviewed *Grand Prix Simulator*) accounts for 20% of the company's sales.

It sounds like the new label's name is just right – *Jet Bike Simulator* is a standard Code Masters simulation (overhead-view racing) with 24 extra scenarios on the second tape to account for the 'Plus' tag. The word 'simulator' is 'a good addition to a title which helps it sell', says Code Masters marketing man Bruce Everiss. Leopards and spots and all that . . .

WIN ANY GAME IN CRASH PLUS THE COMPLETE T-SHIRT RANGE IN A PRETTY HAIRY COMP

LENIN had one. So did Franco Frey. Don Johnson always looks like he's about to have one, Mike Dunn couldn't if he tried (he's so young!) and no-one knows what Lloyd Mangram sports beneath that paper bag.

Father Christmas has a beard, too – but till you can sort out these impostors, we won't let anyone claiming to be Santa into the Towers to pick up your presents. (OK, yes, we accept this is a transparent lie, but it's perfectly true that you could get some of the latest games free by identifying the men behind the beards.)

Just put the letter of the right photo against each name below. But be careful – there's one beard we *haven't* named, and you'll have to tell us who that is too. (Hint: not Mike Dunn.)

The first entry picked from the depths of Lloyd's beard – gave it away! – will win **the complete CRASH T-shirt range** (as advertised on pages 166-167) plus **any game reviewed in this issue of CRASH** (winner's choice).

Ten runners-up will get the game of their choice from this issue, too. So don't forget to tell us what you'd like if you win.

Send your entries and the filled-in form to **BEARD AND WONDERFUL COMP, CRASH, *PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*** to reach us by **February 1** (think of it as an early present for Christmas '88). As usual, the decision of CRASH's appointed judges is final in all respects, so you may have to take it on the chin.

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... **POSTCODE** ....

IF I WIN, I'D LIKE THIS GAME FROM ISSUE 48 OF CRASH ....

....

Just write the right letter beside each name . . .

Kevin Toms (*Football Manager* programmer)
Sir Clive Sinclair (Spectrum inventor)
Graham Stafford (Design – or is he Design?)
Greg Follis (Gargoyle Games)
Alan Sugar (Amstrad boss)
David Crane (Activision founder)
Scott Adams (Adventure International)

And then there's the mystery man . . .
What letter is his/her picture?
And who is it? ....

Crash Competition

RE: SUBSCRIBING TO CRASH

Dear Sir/Madam

It has been drawn to my attention that this branch has not yet received your CRASH subscription order. I trust you will rectify this unfortunate situation at your earliest convenience, and I enclose our form number AOFH(467)-B-DG-89 to be filled out in triplicate and returned with your settlement by January 6 in order that you may receive Issue 49.

Yours faithfully

Guru Denise

CRASH subscriptions cost £15 in the UK and £22 abroad, for 12 issues. Please send this form to: **CRASH SUBSCRIPTIONS, *PO Box 20, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB*,** to arrive by **January 6** if you wish to start your subscription with Issue 49. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to **NEWSFIELD LTD.**

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.... **POSTCODE** ....

PLEASE CHARGE MY ACCOUNT NUMBER

[ ]

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SIGNATURE ....

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CRASH BACK NUMBERS

COMPLETE SET OF CRASH from issue 1 to 47. All in binders. Offers to: J Attwood, *63 Aylsham Road, Norwich, NR3 2HF.*

CRASH NUMBERS 5-23 Good condition. Will sell separated or the lot. Phone: 061 633 9198 ask for Neil.

EVERY ISSUE OF CRASH (1-44) for sale. Will sell in groups, or split. Extreme sentimental value! Reasonable offers to: Simon Roberts, *Marshston, Upper Denbigh Road, St.Asaph, Clwyd, Ll17 0RR.* Tel: 0745 582627.

WANTED CRASH ISSUES 7 and 12. Will pay a good price for the magazines if in good condition. Price negotiable. Tel: 041 638 1839 ask for Richard, evenings or weekends only.

FOR SALE CRASH issues 2-45, sell individually or as a set. Cash or other offers. Write to: David Howells, *Pencoed, Capel Bangor, Aberystwyth, Wales, SY23 3LR.*

WANTED CRASH ISSUES 1,7 and 12. To sort out details Tel: Liss 892347 or write to: Simon Cornwell, *Coombe Way, Harting Coombe, Rake, Liss, Hants, GU33 7JE.*

FANZINES

FORGET OTHER MAGS the best one has arrived. The Speccy Mag is full of reviews, maps, pokes, charts and lots more. Send 50p to Lee Widdows, *4 Friars Avenue, Shefield, Brentwood, Essex, CM15 8HY.*

NEW FANZINE about Spectrum software, hardware and video reviews plus more. For further details send S.A.E. to: Mark Smith, *20 Foxfield Avenue, West Gate, Morecambe, Lancs, LA4 4SS.*

IT'S COOL, IT'S FAB it's Micro-Byte with lots of features including computer, electronincs, film and RPG reviews. Send an A5 S.A.E. to: Micro-Byte, *Gorse Bank, Garth, Powys, LD4 4ANl*

HOY GLOMBLES! SOS is the answer to your distress call. A totally slappy Fanzine on Spectrum games and Spectrum games only. (Mostly). 40p plus stamp to: Will Brooker, *100 Woodhill, Woolwich, London, SE18 6JL.*

SPEC-POKE a fantastic Spectrum fanzine, includes reviews, pokes, adventure, help etc. Send £1 cheque/po and a S.A.E to: Gerald Witherington, *4 Westfield Road, Rhyl, Clwyd, North Wales, LL18 4PN.*

PRO USER is a Spectrum mag, pokes and tips needed or if you would like a copy send 50p and an 18p stamp to: Glen Stanbridge, *Stoneridge, Upperthorpe, Westwoodside, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 2AQ.*

SPECTRUM SMASHES is a new fanzine for your Spectrum. It has forty pages and is only 30p. So write to: Mark Bruce, *56 Baldwins Hill, Loughton, Essex, IG10 1SF.*

TAPE FANZINE Professional and amateur software, PBM and music reviews. Send game for review and/or S.A.E for details of issue 1 to: Paul Brogden, *100 Liverpool Old Road, Much Hoole, Preston, Lancs, PR4 4QA.*

TAPE MAG is now only 75p a month. For your copy send 75p to: Tape Mag UK, *22 Bridle Close, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 9SZ.* Tape Mag comes on tape.

HARDWARE SALES

RUBBER KEY SPECTRUM for sale, with black and white Portable TV, Tape Recorder, Interface and 21 games. All for £100 o.n.o. Quick sale needed. Ben Parry, 0291 424662.

128K +2 UNDER GUARANTEE Kempston Mouse, SpecDrum Cheetah Joystick. All boxed, recent software, loads of mags. Worth £450 sell for £250 o.n.o Bargain! Tel: Andrew Rea, 0626 68491.

AMX MOUSE GP505 Printer - £45 each or both for £75. Both in excellent condition. Alex Waddell, *136 Mirren Drive, Duntocher, Glasgow, G81 6LD.* Tel: 0389 76377 Genuine reason for sale.

SPECTRUM 128K Data Recorder, Microdrive + Interface 1, Multiface 128, Joystick Interface, Joyball, £200 of software, 20 cartridges, 30 spectrum magazines, 3 books, worth over £450. Sell for £200 o.n.o. Phone: 040 922 447 Evenings.

SPECTRUM +2 FOR SALE Printer, Joystick, 50 games, Portable Mono Television, Posters, Atari Console. All for £250! Barry Hookway, 01-803 3873g

SPECCY 48K with Interface II and five new games. Very good condition, sell for £80 or swap for Commodore 64 and data cord. Contact Mark Cowan, 0469 75046.

FOR SALE Spectrum 128 plus lots of hardware and software. £200 o.n.o. Write to: Mr E Lotman, *11 Rebecca Court, Highview Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 4EQ.*

SPECTRUM + VTX5000 MODEM, Wafa Drive, Joystick Interface Plus £200 of software. Any offers Phone: 03212 4336 or write to: Jason Bennett, *27 Park Croft, Polegate, East Sussex, BN26 5LB.*

WELL CHEAP CHEETAH Sweet Talker (speech synth) boxed with instructions. In perfect condition only £10 plus postage. Sale due to upgrade. Phone: Anil Seth on 02357 3160 (after 4pm).

SPECTRUM Beta Disk Interface, 5.25 inch Drive, Games Disk, £175 worth of tape software, switchable Joystick Interface (Kempston, Cursor, I2), Quickshot Two Joystick. Any serious offers. Tel: Rochdale 56823 and ask for Mark.

ZX SPECTRUM + with Joystick and Interface. Modem with comm. software, Data Recorder. All boxed and in good condition. £192 with over £500 software, sell for £250. Tel: 041 357 3306.

FOR SALE SPECTRUM + 48K, Interface, Joystick, Tape Deck, Dust cover, plus two games for £60. Tel: Maldon 783619 ask for Stephen Lincoln.

SPECTRUM 128K +2 for sale. Excellent condition. Plus games. Hardly used. £100. Tel 0895 442659 after 6pm and ask for Dave.

48K SPECTRUM Data Recorder, two port Interface, Kempston Joystick and leads, plus over £500 worth of original games in 3 cassette boxes. £200 o.n.o. Phone: 0245 321123 ask for Martin.

BOTTOMS UP! O.K Now I have your attention, I'm selling a MSX with a remote control robot, plus games. Good condition, worth £300 sell for £125. Phone: Reading 867395 after 6pm, ask for Stefan.

FOR SALE 48K Spectrum computer, with Light Pen, RAT, and many other extras including Lo-profile keybord, plus software. £150. Tel: 0773 863265 ask for Paul.

ZX SPECTRUM PLUS with Interface 1 and Microdrive Interface 2, Multiface 1 Quickshot Joystick, loads of software, Data Recorder and many magazines including all issues of Input £300 ono. Tel: 01-397 3089 after 5pm and ask for Marcus.

SPECTRUM FOR SALE re-faced recently, Tape Player, 200 games, Currah Speech, Interface, 2 Joysticks and every issue of CRASH worth over £600 cost £160 ono. Tel: 0253 824288.

HARDWARE SWAP

WILL SWAP MY Joyball for a Quickshot II or Cheetah 125 Joystick: Joyball is in brilliant nick. Please make sure joystick is in good condition before applying. Phone: 0670 761283 ask for Gordon.

SWAP SNAPSHOT II Interface and software, very little used, for ZX Interface one or any offers considered. Contact: Connor Sadler, *40 The Oval, North Anston, Sheffield, S31 7BY.* QRY

LOTS OF STUFF to swap. Sharp Data Recorder, new, boxed. Snapshot II. New model 200. Games to swap. Ken Maclean, *15 Tom-Na-Faidhir, Claggan, Fort William, PH33 6PU.*

INK PRINTER FOR Spectrum 2 wanted. Will swap for cash, hardware or software. Write to: Lee, *7 Longfold, Maghull, Merseyside, L31 6AF.* Tel: 051 531 0102.

HARDWARE WANTED

WANTED DEUS EX MACHINA - for cash or as a swap - and a VTX 5000. Phone: 0734 479468 ask for Tim or leave name and number.

WANTED MULTIFACE ONE must be reasonable also 128K wafers for wafadrive. Write to: Paul Balmer, *23 Percy Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, NE25 8RF.*

WANTED SPECTRUM THERMAL printer in good working order. Plus any printer paper. You state the price. Tel: 0272 843293 after 5pm and ask for Pierre.

WANTED ROTRONICS WAFADRIVE or Microdrive and Interface 1. Will swap for 22 games including *Elite, Tomahawk, Ping Pong* etc. Ring Gary on 0642 558021 after 5pm except Wed and Thur.

WANTED MULTIFACE ONE or Snapshot 2. Will swap for DK Tronics Lightpen, Designing Pencil and *Friday 13th*, must be in good condition. Tel: 0388 818553.

PRINTER AND INTERFACE wanted for 48K Spectrum £25 max. Tel: 0587 20974 ask for Alan.

WANTED URGENTLY Working Multiface one. Swap for many games. All original. Write to: Dan Warner, *7 Osberton Road, Summertown, Oxford, OX2 7NU,* or Phone: 0865 511775 after 4pm and ask for Dan.

WANTED COMMODORE 64, plus leads and tape recorder. Send lowest price to: Steve Gallon, *8 Sunnidale, Fellside Park, Whickham, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE16 5TT.*

PROFESSIONAL KEYBOARD WANTED. My girlfriend is learning to type so rubber keys are no longer good enough. If you can help contact: Ray Casson, on 0946 63600 (Good excuse, huh?!)

ALPHACOM POWER PACK or complete outfit. Contact: K A Schimmel, *5 Darwin Close, Nottingham, NG5 9LN.*

HOMEGROWN SOFTWARE

EXHANGE UNWANTED cheques/PO's value £2.75 for brand new copy of graphic adventure *Homicide Hotel*, as recommended in September's CRASH (84%). Send to: Wallsoft, *10 Wheatlands Park, Redcar, Cleveland, TS10 2PD.* QRY

ADULTIA mind blowing, humour filled adventure for your Spectrum. Beware it won't be easy. £2.00. Sent within 7 days. Cheques or PO's to: G M Dobbs, *37 Bryn Hedd, Hewdreforgaw Estate, Gufach Goch, Nr.Porth, Mid Glam, CF39 8UT.* No cash please.

PBM

PBM. Three great PBM games, boxing fantasy and war games. Turn costs 40p. For more details and start-up write to: Anthony Brown, *East Park Avenue, Hull, N.Humberside, HU8 9AE.*

PBM! *Domain* is the latest play-by-mail game, a futuristic land ownership game. Great value and enjoyment. Send S.A.E to: Domain Systems, *4 Park Grove, Bexleyheath, Kent, DA7 6AR.*

PBM SOCCER MANAGER new league starting the ultimate so far in PBM soccer games. Prizes for winning managers. S.A.E to: R Sullivan, *47 Thors Oak, Stanford-Le-Hope, Essex, SS17 7BZ.*

PBM Sector ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha. Hand moderated Sci-fi PBM. Trade, war and diplomacy. S.A.E to: P Brogden, *100 Liverpool Old Road, Much Hoole, Preston, PR4 4QA.* First five replies - free setups!

COMPUTER-MODERATED SOCCER PBM. Detailed print-outs, free turns offer and more for only 50p and stamp per turn. S.A.E to: PMS, *554 Goresbrook Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM9 4XD.*

SOFTWARE SALES

GAMES FOR SALE 10 games on one tape for only £2. Also a pokes tape with over 50 pokes for free. Send a S.A.E. to: Marc McLean, *164 Cumbrae Crescent (South), Hawthornhill, Dumbarton, Scotland, G82 5AR.*

WIDE VARIETY OF games including *Bombjack, Bobby Bearing, Skool Daze, Ghost Busters* and lots more. 27 in all, only £30. Contact: Mark Andersen 0273 36084.

SEND FOR YOUR free leaflet containing many second hand titles. Write to: C Hirst,

41 Station Road, Honley, Huddersfield, West Yorks, HD7 2LL. Please include a S.A.E.

SOFTWARE FOR SALE send a S.A.E for more details to: Ian Forbes, 14 Dorset Avenue, Barley Mow, Birtley, Chester-Le-Street, County Durham, DH3 2DU.

GAMES FOR SALE all original, prices from 50p. Also Spectravideo Joyball for sale, only £10. Phone: 0691 652989 after 6pm, ask for Adrian.

AM SELLING OLD games at less than 50% shop price. Full list from: Ian Sumter, 10 All Saints Close, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 5HT. All letters answered. First come, first served. I pay P&P.

30 GAMES INCLUDING Rocky, Chess, Wally, Cylu, Jet Set Willy, Bruno, Zaxxon, Ghost Busters, Froggy, Splat, Arcadia, Pyjamarama and Pheenix Pyramid. Cost over £150, will sell for £40. Will not split. Phone: 0923 30868 ask for Peter.

SPECCY SOFTWARE FOR SALE. 140 plus games from 75p. All originals. Gauntlet £4, Mercenary £5, Elite £6, Cobra £3.50. Phone 0285 66370 or write to: Tara Morton, 35 Bowling Green Avenue, Cirencester, Glos, GL7 2HB.

SPECTRUM GAMES Gauntlet, Highlander, Prohibition, Deep Strike, Cyberun, Space Harrier, Tapper, Avenger, The Boggit, Kat Trap and Butch Hard Guy. £3 each. All originals. Darren Martin, 74 Church Road, Topsley, Hereford, HR1 1RS.

SOFTWARE SWAP

HELP I NEED Doomdarks Revenge. Will swap for Curragh Speech. Wot a bargin. Write to: Paul Gale, 1 Cumbrian Way, Millbrook, Southampton, Hants, SO1 4AP. It would help if you were local.

GAMES TO SWAP send your list for mine. Over 250 games. Write to: Paul Shanks, 57 Outer Circle, Talinton, Somerset, TA1 2BY.

SPECTRUM SOFTWARE EXCHANGE CLUB. Tired of your software? Then write to us to obtain details of this club. SSEC, 7 Longfold, Maghull, Merseyside, L31 6AF. Send a S.A.E.

HUNDREDS OF GAMES to swap. Send your list for mine. (Anyone into war games) (Irish cyclists rule). Write to: Dezzy Gibbons, Bodeen, Tatoath, Co.Meath, Eire.

WILL SWAP Cauldron II, Super Soccer, Cyberun, or Fat Worm for Exolon, Bombjack, Zynaps and Green Beret. Phone: 0203 662611 ask for Daniel.

PLEASE CAN ANYONE swap The Living Daylights for Leader Board. For more details Tel: 0723 352342 and ask for Paul.

70 PLUS GAMES to swap. Send your list or S.A.E. for mine. Mr C Cooper, 1 Carr Manor Avenue, Leeds, Yorkshire, LS17 5BJ.

DO YOU LIVE IN Barnsley? Are you fed up with your old games? Then swap them for my games. Write to: Robert Sorfleet, 168 Huddersfield Road, Flat 3, Barnsley, S75 1HA.

SOFTWARE SWAPS and sales club. Buy, sell and swap games. Free games for the first 10 members. For more information send a S.A.E. to: J Pancae, 19 Cotswold Avenue, Sticker, Cornwall, PL26 7ER.

WILL SWAP GAMES adventures with you. Send your name, address and your list as soon as possible to me. Michael Godney, Galway Road, Rosecommon, Ireland.

WANTED: all your fancy loading routines. Will swap the latest software including: Starglide, Exolon, Batty Barbarian, Wizball and much more. Also wanted Multiface 128. Tel: 0563 43190 ask for Scott.

I WILL SWAP Leader Board, Scooby Doo for Killed Until Dead. Phone: 0232 867807 and ask for Joseph. After 6pm.

YO! WANNA SWAP SOFTWARE? If so, please contact Samu Mielonen, at: Hameenpuisto 15 A28, 33210 Tampere, Finland. P.S. Over 900 titles to swap! Trade Enquires Welcome . P.P.S write soon, don't hesitate.

48/128 GAMES TO SWAP. I have over 1200 games and I will swap with anyone. Many latest titles. Please write to: Jukka Kosonen, Kumpu 58700, Sulkava, Finland. P.S. Including   3!

HI! I WILL SWAP my games for yours. All mine are top games. Send your list for

mine to: Paul Ryan, 292 Northway, Maghull, Merseyside, L31 6BQ.

SWAP Chiller, Transmiter and Sigma 7 for Radarscan, Destruct, Exolon or Sidewize. From: Matthew Hutchinson, Forest Edge, Rhodes, Minnis, Nr.Canterbury, CT4 6XX. Tel: 862875.

WILL SWAP Starglider for Elite. Also swap Quartet, Dragons Lair 2, Army Moves and Cobra. Want Sabateur 2 and any new top games. Phone: 061 633 6488 and ask for Andrew.

YOU WANT GAMES. I got them, send your list for mine. I have stuff like Cobra, Barbarian, Living Stone, Sabotuer II, Wonder Boy, Arkanoid and Silent Service etc. N. Boeren, Voorhuis 15, Drachten (FR) 9205 BD, The Netherlands.

MANY GOOD GAMES to swap including Exolon, Trap Door and Gauntlet. Your list for mine. All letters answered. Write to: Jonathan Livingstone, 15 Duart Drive, Newton Mearns, Glasgow, G77 5DS.

WANTED AMX Mouse, Artist II and Animator 1. Will swap for Enduro Racer, Batman, Uridium, The Sentinel and many others. All originals. Tel: 0582 507696 ask for David.

WANTED Chaos, D-Day and Battle Cars by Games Workshop. Swap for Druid, Thantos, Popeye, Thrust, I Ball, Rats or other. Tel: 0222 882582 and ask for Brad, after 6pm. Or write: Brad Owen, 262 Bedwsas Road, Caerphilly, CF8 3AW.

SOFTWARE WANTED

LYNX COMPUTER SOFTWARE wanted. Games wanted as soon as possible. If you have any games to sell Tel: 0603 744947 between 5pm and 10pm, ask for Wayne.

WANTED Spectrum version of Ikari Warriors or Fist 2 for any two of the following games: Uridium, Exploding Fist, Zaxxon, Double Take or Football Manager. Neil Bailey, 19 St.Catherines Crescent, Bramley, Leeds, LS13 2JU.

OTHER

OVER 60 OLD and new pokes for 65p and there is also a free game for the first

person to order. Send S.A.E and cheque or PO to: Paul Lewis, 45 Epworth Road, Rhyl, Clwyd, N.Wales, LL18 2NT.

DESPERATELY WANTEDPlus Two Manual. Will pay! (My Spectrum fell off the back of a lorry). Also Quill, Illustrator and Patch. All for £10. Phone: 0602 264471 ask for John.

WANTED any tips on SpecDrum programming, including writing scratch samples. Also any information on MIDI would be gratefully received, cheers! Paul Godley, 3 Maxwell Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 7BW.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMER REQUIRES good, imaginative graphic artist (London or South East). Phone: Mark on 01-577 7799 (anytime). Ask for room 4.

WILL GIVE Graphic Adventure Creator and Max Headroom in exchange for CRASH issues 1-2, 5-6, 7-16, and 19. In complete unmarked good condition. Ian Buck, Cuckoo Pen, Aughton, Collingbourne Kingston, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 3SA. Tel: 026485 286.

WANTED FELLOW ADVENTURER to swap clues and tips. Also into G.A.C. and Strategy games. Send a S.A.E. to: K McBain, 52 Fox Covert Avenue, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH12 6UH.

WANT MULTIFACE POKES ??? for only 70p. I'll provide "300+" m/f POKEs! First 10 replies get a Speccy game free. Don't delay, order today! (Include S.A.E.) Robert Gabriel, 67 Highland Terrace, Uffculme, Devon, EX15 3EN.

CAN YOU PROGRAM a Spectrum to talk? Send games (on tape), telephone number and address to: Vincent Vity, 19 Croft Street, Morecambe, Lancs, LA4 5SS. (If wanted back include enough postage).

WANTED hints, tips, POKEs and fanzines. In fact any help at all. Please please can anyone help me with Holy Grail and Sabateur. Vince Butler, 12 Park Road, Earl Shilton, Leics.

ADVENTURE SOLUTIONS! over 200 top solutions available, including The Pawn and Shadows of Mordor. 50p each or for full list send S.A.E to: Lee Hodgson, 54 Church Street, Tewkesbury, Glos, GL20 5RZ.

If your ad isn't featured this month, don't despair! We'll do our best to get it in ASAP ono (as they say in classifieds), and if the worst comes to the worst (which it hasn't for two months now, but we're still waiting) you can always send the ad in again. Don't forget to fill out the whole form, give unflinching obedience to the small print below, and USE BLOCK CAPITALS! (Otherwise the worst could come to the worst.)

1 Individuals and small organisations such as fanzines and homegrown-software publishers are welcome to use the CRASH classifieds, but professional businesses cannot. Paid-for classifieds for businesses will probably be introduced soon.

2 Classified ads should not be more than 30 words long (numbers, postcodes etc count as one word each), and should be written in the boxes provided; there is no box-number service, so YOUR AD COPY MUST INCLUDE YOUR ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER.

3 Classified ads must be submitted on a CRASH classifieds form, or a photocopy of the form.

4 Absolutely no ads for selling or swapping pirated software or which encourage software piracy will be accepted.

5 CRASH reserves the rights to edit, publish and not publish classified ads without reference to the advertiser, and the magazine is not liable for any loss caused to advertisers through their own wording of ad copy or the appearance or nonappearance of ads.

6 If you send an ad in PLEASE don't ring us up asking when it's going to be published – we'll just print as many in each issue as we can (the worst coming to the worst notwithstanding).

I WANT A FREE CRASH CLASSIFIED!

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POSTCODE ....

TELEPHONE NUMBER ....

WRITE YOUR AD COPY IN THE BOXES, CHOOSE A HEADING, AND SEND THIS FORM (OR A PHOTOCOPY) TO: THE CLASSIFIEDS, CRASH, PO BOX 10, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE SY8 1DB

WRITE AD COPY HERE . . .

HEADINGS (TICK ONE)

CRASH BACK NUMBERS ☐   HOMEGROWN SOFTWARE ☐
(OFFERED OR WANTED)   PBM ☐
FANZINES ☐   PEN PALS ☐
HARDWARE SALES ☐   SOFTWARE SALES ☐
HARDWARE SWAP ☐   SOFTWARE SWAP ☐
HARDWARE WANTED ☐   SOFTWARE WANTED ☐ OTHER ☐

KING GRUB!

© MARKIE + GORDON x.

WINNERS & PRIZES

GAME SET AND RESULTS

WE WERE swamped with entries for Ocean's hot and sweaty Issue 46 competition – despite the cockup on the wordsquare! As we speak (well, write) **Paul Phillips** will be looking forward to the first prize of a video recorder, the video game *Winter Olympics* and the Spectrum compilation *Game Set And Match*, which Ocean will be whisking down to Bristol BS13 soon. The four lucky winners of second prizes will each be receiving copies of *Winter Olympics* and *Game Set And Match*. They are; **Iain Waring**, Dyfed, Wales SA19 8RA; **Paul Hampson**, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 9AH; **Jon Lee**, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2TQ; and **Lee Ritchie**, Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire FK4 1JN.

And another five clever runners-up will each receive *Game Set And Match*. They just happen to be: **Ronny Meikle**, Glasgow, Ayrshire, Scotland KA4 8JN; **Andrew J Sylvester**, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 2QX; **Richard Mac-Donald**, Scotstoun, Glasgow G14 9DZ; **Gary Sidwell**, Market Weighton, York YO4 3DH; and **Howard Alexander**, Faversham, Kent ME13 8KW.

STOMP, STOMP

A RAMPANT gorilla rampaged through November's CRASH, not only breaking out to the cover but also starring in an Activision comp heralding the imminent *Rampage* coin-op licence.

There's no monkeying around with competition entries but when it comes to prizes, how could we resist? The winner of a fabulous complete gorilla suit is **Steven Fitzpatrick** from Slough, Berks SL3 8UD. Second prize goes to **Jake Johnson** of Lydgate, Oldham, who receives a gorilla head, hands and feet (not real, we hope). **Brain Lawson** of Fife, Scotland KY12 9HJ gets a gorilla head and hands (not the same two-headed gorilla, presumably . . .). Fourth prize of a gorilla head goes to **Llifon Edwards** of Llangefni, Gwynedd LL77 7SJ (perhaps we'll just ring the zoo . . .). And fifth out of the cage was **J Norton** from Ashington, West Sussex, who gets a rubber (whew!) gorilla mask. Like the following 25 runners-up, all the above receive a copy of Activision's *Rampage* and a triffic poster of the game.

Gary Ingham, Gorton, Manchester M18 8NJ; S Jevons, Wombourne, Staffs WV5 8JZ; Mark Adsett, Brighton, Sussex BN1 8FD; Paul Toogood, Shelton Lock, Derby DE2 9EW; Stephen Pelling, Preston, Lancashire PR1 5QP; Tracy Thomson, Abergele, N.Wales LL22; David Fowler, Aberdeen, Scotland AB2 0JQ; Stephen Bradburn, Swinton, Manchester M27 1LU; John Barker, Salford, Lancs M5 3DQ; Shane Hasson, County Derry, N Ireland BT47 4TR; Mr A Aktar, Stourbridge, W.Mids DY9 8BG; Stephen Calvert, Washington, Tyne & Wear NE37 1HH; Colin Masters, County Durham SR7 7BW; Jojo Cicero, Cardiff, Wales CF3 0AG; Jonathan Ridehalgh, Markfield, Leics LE6 0SS; Ben Bennett, Gateacre, Liverpool L25 2QD; John McFadyen, Norbury, London SW16 4QE; Matthew Alexander, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 5LY; Grant Nathan, Romford, Essex RM6 5EX; Stuart Pollard, South Croydon, Surrey CR2 6JE; Stephen Phythian, St Helens, Merseyside WA10 6AZ; David Baines, Nr.Barnsley, South Yorkshire S72 7BB; P Blackford, Waterloo, Liverpool L22 1RF; Imaad Shan, Wimbledon, London SW19 4AA; Jason McGrath, Swindon, Wilts SN3 2RJ.

OH, WHAT AN EXOLONT COMP

And oh, what exolont prizes as stumped up by Hewson for this Issue 43 caption comp. The winner was **M Williams** of Kent TN10 3EP who came up with the caption *OK . . . OK . . . you've sussed me out . . . the Milky Bars are on me.* It may have displeased Mike D for a while but it had me tittering into my sticky bun for hours, if not minutes. M wins a VIP day out at The *PCW* Show, a water zapper and a copy of *Exolon*.

The three runners-up, who each receive a water zapper and a copy of *Exolon*, are **Joe Hole** of London SE10 8SX, **Lee Sharrock** of Liverpool L32 8US and **Paul Tinker** of Nottinghamshire S81 0NR. 20 runners-up each receive a copy of *Exolon* and they are . . .

Mr S D Crane, Leicester; Simon Lee, Derbys DE7 6GR; Owen Galt, Nottingham NG4 4FL; D Blackett, Co Durham; Daniel Goulds, Norfolk NR28 0JN; Mark Sammons, Wandsworth SW18 4AT; Martin Spraggett, Coventry CV2 1RQ; David Navin, Lancs LA4 4ED; Jon Williams, Glos; Mr R Babb, Bucks HP15 6DS; Neil Taylor, Devon TQ1 4PF; Stephen Stickings, Lancs LA3 2QW; John Heevy, Belfast BT6 0HQ; 'A Non E Mouse', Surrey GU8 5SS; Martin Gilbert, Staffs WS15 1BU; David N Kobal, Leicesterhire LE19 6NB; Dean Shepherd, Avon BS15 6YD; Robert Sheldon, West Midlands B72 1HY; Charles Allen, Derby DE3 2JE; and Adrian Maloney, nr Wigan WN6 8EN

A cautionary tale: an entrant with the caption 'Okay, it was me. I stole the buttered scone!' would have been one of the runners-up . . . but he/she forgot to give a name and address!
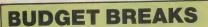
GOGGLE!

INSTEAD OF THE QUEEN'S SPEECH . . .

HAD A LOOK at the Christmas schedule for films on TV? Pretty dire. Only a video can fill those hours after Christmas dinner.

There's always a wide range of videos around at in Christmas ranging from videos like **RCA/ Columbia**'s *Babes In Toyland* for the younger members of the family to gruesome horrors like **Medusa**'s *The Gate*, on general release at the cinema and now also on video.

A video for all tastes is *Short Circuit*, available on the **CBS/Fox** label from December 3. The talented director John Badham and screen cutey Ally Sheedy, who previously worked together in the computer thriller *War Games*, join Steve Guttenberg (*Police Academy*, *Cocoon*)in this latest robotic runaway film. No 5 is alive – but will Sheedy and Guttenberg convince the military before they blow the pile of microchips to the big circuit board in the sky?

Medusa Home Video's December 3 release *Willy Milly* is a strange old affair. Just imagine how the fun-loving teenager Milly feels when she is endowed with an extra appendage making her a bit more like the boys. With just a 15 certificate it should be a hilarious romp for all the family, boys and girls alike.

If you like something a bit tastier than a turkey leg to get your teeth into at Christmas then be sure to get **Avatar**'s December 4 release *Specters*. Little do the small team of archaeologists, led by Donald Pleasence (*Halloween*), realise what terrible evil they are about to unleash upon themselves when they go on an investigative tour of the darkest reaches of the Egyptian catacombs.

After all that Christmas pudding and those killer mince pies don't you think you could do with a little exercise? **Hi-Pressure Video**, distributed by **RCA/Columbia** think you do. But all that running around is a bit pointless, so why not stretch that right arm and push *Shape Up* in the video recorder? It's the story of the hot and sweaty day-to-day workings of Roger's Gym.

Also to be released on December 18 from Hi-Pressure is *Hot Splash*, another film about what happens when a load of teenagers get together for some wild beach parties and competition surfing.

Avid viewers of the April TV miniseries *Escape From Sobibor* will be pleased to hear that **Sony Video** has gained the video rights to the highly-acclaimed film about the Nazis' treatment of the Jews – and are set to release it on December 14. Just to convince you of its value, Sony has promised that there will be no more TV screenings for at least a year after that.

After only a few months in the cinemas the highly-praised (in the UK anyway) *Who's That Girl*, starring that typical girl-off-the-street **Madonna**, comes out on video just in time for Christmas – December 18 release. Yet again she gets into heaps of trouble, this time with costar **Griffin Dunne** (*After Hours*) whom she drags all over town, and ends up in big trub with two local gangsters. It really is a hilarious black comedy, and well worth seeing.

The summer cinema hit of this year was undoubtedly **Lethal Weapon**. And just when you thought the likes of Mel Gibson (*Mad Max I, II, III*) had returned to Australia and Danny Glover (*The Color Purple*) had gone back to his roots **Warner Home Video** announces the January 8 release of this American cop movie.

Gibson plays a cop on the edge and Glover is his newly-found partner just waiting for retirement. But now both of them have got involved in the investigation of their careers. It's fast and furious action just waiting to burst on the small screen.

CIC Video's January 15 release *Gung Ho* is about the changing face of American industry and the stampeding influence of Japanese technology. As Hunt Stevenson, Michael Keaton (*Touch And Go*, *Mr Mom*, *Johnny Dangerously*), saves the local car factory by persuading Assan Motors to set up business there. Little do the locals realise that the foreigners bring tradition as well as money with them.

Stevenson must keep the locals and the employers happy.

Just as the Vietnam films are dying out in the cinema the biggest of them all, **Platoon**, comes out of the jungle into your living room on January 29. Platoon gained four Oscars in the 1987 Academy Awards and !ooks set to become the biggest release of January. The film tells the story of the Vietnam war through the eyes of new recruit Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen – *The Wraith*, Lucas). Through his eyes you see the suffering, the madness, the terror and the pointlessness of the war which dragged on so long. On simultaneous release is *Platoon* – the computer game by **Ocean**. More news about that in next issue.

▶ *Platoon*: out of the jungle and onto the small screens

EXTREME PREJUDICE
Guild Home Video .... PG

SIX EX-SOLDIERS, all listed as killed in action, led by a hard-nosed US Army Major called Hackett (Michael Ironside – *Top Gun*, *Scanners*) are sent on that favourite of American devices, a covert mission. But the territory they infiltrate is small-town Texas where they aim to rob the bank using the very latest in covert technology.

Though money is stolen, the real reason behind the robbery is Cash Bailey's deposit box and some top-secret government papers inside it. Cash (Powers Boothe – *The Emerald Forest*), who smuggles drugs across the Texas/Mexico border and is a king in his own hideaway bandit-town, is in conflict with his best friend Jack Benteen (Nick Nolte – *48 Hours*, *Down And Out In Beverly Hills*), a modern day Texas Ranger, not only because Benteen's boss gets killed in a drugs bust but also because Benteen's girlfriend was once Cash's lover.

When Hackett and his team bungle the bank robbery, Benteen finds himself standing a man alone fighting for common decency against the powers of organised crime and legally sanctioned murder.

Nolte, weathered to aged granite, is in fine form as Ranger Benteen, a man out of his depth, but a survivor to the last, in a film curiously spaghetti-Western in feel. *Extreme Prejudice* walks a tightrope between believability and ludicrousness but maintains its tension before threatening to overbalance in the Peckinpah-style slow-motion blood-letting at its conclusion. The violence forms a background to a story drenched in cynicism, rather than being about cynical people. A taut, but tasteless and flawed, thriller.
ROGER KEAN 69%

Extreme Prejudice *starts off as a credible action-packed thriller, but sadly halfway through it starts to turn into some kind of blood-drenched* A-Team *clone.* Extreme Prejudice *may not hold together as strong as some other so-called 'tough movies' but the action is intense and the story easy to follow even at such a pace. I was expecting a violent movie – coming from the producers of* First Blood *and* Rambo *– and I got it!*
DOMINIC HANDY 77%

AMERICAN ANTHEM
Guild Home Video .... PG

DIRECTOR ALBERT MAGNOLI (*Purple Rain*) tries to ride on the popularity of sport dramas in this amazingly thin plot about a young man caught in 'a conflict of desire and responsibility'. The sport is gymnastics – photogenic indeed, you might think, but thrown away by Magnoli's lacklustre cinematography – at which he wants to be the best, the responsibility is for his shredded family.

American Anthem stars the 1984 Olympic gold medallist Mitch Gaylord as Steve Tevere; his prowess on the horizontal bars is undoubted, but his limited acting skills require a director who cares about actors rather than designing dull pop promo scenes to sell the insipid, though insistently heavy, soundtrack.

America may be great, but it shouldn't stoop to foist such blatantly fascist, soft-porn athletics (does the director know anything about the sport?) on an audience well able to distinguish between dramatically realised people and plastic promo androids. Fine if you're into like-heavy-man-sounds and meaningless heroics, insulting if you even vaguely think.
OLIVER FREY 10%

American Anthem *is very strangely constructed. It starts off involved and interesting, with no-one taking an obvious starring role. But as soon as the director pushes Mitch Gaylord to the fore it gets wishy-washy and boring. The soundtrack is the saving grace which made me watch to the end – which is, incidentally, terrible and up in the air.*
DOMINIC HANDY .... 50% ▶

¡THREE AMIGOS!

RCA/Columbia .... PG

MEET . . . The Three Amigos, brave, dashing stars of Hollywood's silver screen. The year is 1916, and having seen their fearless shows at the movies, the beautiful but troubled Carmen begs the trio to help her Mexican village, under threat from the evil El Guapo, bandit chief and an all-round nasty person.

The eponymous three are Lucky Day (Steve Martin – *Roxanne, The Jerk, The Man with Two Brains*), Dusty Bottoms (Chevy Chase – *Fletch, National Lampoon's Summer Vacation*), and Ned Nederlander (Martin Short – *Innerspace*). However, they believe the whole business is only for a film; they assume automatically that the reward money offered is their pay, and presume the town admires them because everyone's seen their films. Thus the comic situation is set up.

Everything goes well, for the first few hours. At Carmen's bidding, the trio mount their horses and confront El Guapo's bandits who have ridden into town. Unaware of the reality of the situation, the three actors let fly with a flurry of insults, much to the surprise of the baddies, who have never come up against any resistance from the townspeople.

El Guapo returns with a band of 50 men the next day, and it is only when Lucky is grazed by one of the bandit's bullets that the three amigos realise it's all for real...

¡Three Amigos! is a really funny film. Steve Martin's performance is, as usual, excellent and the other two manage to keep up with him admirably. Though there are definitely moments in the film where the scriptwriters' sense of humour seems to have died, things like the singing bush and the Three Amigos introduction really pick it up. Miss it at your peril.

MIKE DUNN **90%**

Bring together two superb comedians, Steve Martin and Chevy Chase, throw in an unknown quantity – Martin Short – for good measure and give them a slow and badly-written script. Martin and Chase try their best to make the most of a lacklustre and unfunny dialogue and develop characters that were never meant to be anything but shallow. ¡Three Amigos! is about half an hour too long, and successful visual gags are few and far between. The film had plenty of potential, but I found myself watching in gleeful anticipation of laughs that never came...

JULIAN RIGNALL **36%**

STEVE AND GARF AND KNOBBO AND BOB AND FINGERS AND TRACEY

It all happened at once when PAUL EVANS took pad, pen and VTX to Micronet's Turbo **chatline**

CHATLINES are simply a way of talking to other Micronet-users. Most involve a frame containing a message sent by a user which is changed when another user sends a message; any number of 'netters can see the message by keying the page it's on. But I find this annoying – if you miss a message, you've missed it for good!

There are many specialist chatlines (a gay one was launched, for example); to see the entire list look on Micronet page ⋆811#. I find *Turbo* the best. It was launched around 16 months ago and took a new approach.

Four boxes appear on the screen, and each person chatters or gossips in turn. So if you miss anything while sending in a message, you can look back through the archives. While I chatted on *Turbo*, 12 people logged in and talked away. There are some great characters on the line who'll have you reeling with laughter, and there's just one guiding principle: everyone is there to enjoy themselves and any swearing or abuse is out. You do, of course, get the odd idiot who gets cocky, and is promptly put down by everyone else.

It's common to have a nickname on the chatlines – and just as common to get into a chaotic conversation with half a dozen 'netters at once . . .

Hi there! Anyone fancy a chat?
Steve: Hi, Paul!
Hi, Steve! How are you?
Steve: I'm fine, thanks. Just watching a film. It's not bad.
Garfield: Hi! I'll have a chat!
Hi, Garfield! Do you use chatlines often?
Garfield: Yes! Every day!
Why do you use Turbo *in preference to* Talkabout, *which is easier to use?*
Garfield: I don't know. This is more popular and the people are more real. Also, I meet a number of friends here.
Are you a regular, Steve?
Steve: Yes, I am.
Your thoughts on Talkabout?
Steve: I use *Turbo* because it's cheaper than *Talkabout* and I can listen to music or watch TV as well!
Also, you don't get interviewed on *Turbo*! Any chance you can mention my terrapin-washing agency in the write-up? It's doing very well at the moment.
Hmmmm. How many people use chatlines and what are they like?
Steve: Well, I mailbox four or five people all the time, but I see about 30 or so regulars on the various lines. There are also a lot of people who nip in now and again for a chat.
Garfield: I usually set weekends for meets with about 5-10 people and go on each evening for a chat with anyone!
Steve: Garf does a good Tim impression and catches me all the time. .
So which do you think is the best chatline?
Steve: *Turbo* is the best by far, it's very quick, you get the point of

the conversation over and can't waffle, and you can look at four messages at once.
Garfield: I also, like Steve, MBX a number of people each time I'm on. I like *Turbo*. You can see the messages after you come back from a five-minute wander!! I usually miss Quickchat messages.
By this time my store is filling with the messages, so I break off to save my findings to tape. Just as I go . . .
Knobbo: Hi, Paul! Haven't seen you for a while.
(What happens next is impossible, because the chatters live on opposite sides of the country – it shows what a bunch of loonies Micronetters are! Bob now appears . . .)
Steve: Hi, Bob!
Garf: I'm back! Is Paul? Here's a Hob Nob, Tracey!
Steve: And one for me, Garf ole pal!
Hi! I'm back! Hi, Knobbo, how long have you been using Turbo *for now?*
Knobbo: As long as it's been here!
How long's that, then?
Knobbo: About 16 months!
Fingers: Evening all!
Steve: Garf! You broke my Hob Nob! How come I always get the one off the top of the packet?
Garf: Sorry, Steve. Hi, Fingers! How's Maddy?
Hi, Fingers! Anyone have any complaints about Turbo *or the fact that I don't have a Hob Nob? Could we possibly get back to the subject?*
Fingers: Hi, all! This looks like fun!
Garfield: Well, it breaks about once a week.

Bob: Come on, Garf, it's more like twice a day!
Garfield: Sometimes it's slow putting up messages (10 minutes, compared with 30 seconds normally) but that's all, really.
Bob: Complaints? *Lots!*
Steve: Sometimes you get some wallies on here who insist on putting up foul language. This is a family show! There is a ten-year-old and a six-year-old using my account and I have to go on other chatlines when they're on.
Garfield: On swearing, my mum (Joan Collins) has been on here and came straight off because someone swore at her.
Tracey: Complaints? Yeah, idiots who continually pester girls.
Let's hope Micronet gets on the case. Fingers, how do you like chatlines?
Fingers: How close are you to the POKEs editor of CRASH?
Are you referring to LLoyd or Nick?
Fingers: Yup, Lloyd, that's the one.
Never met him. He gets a lot of mail, though!
Fingers: Well, tell him to get the *Head Over Heels* POKE right!
Steve: My mate thinks the same as Tracey.
Finally, how long do you chat for and does the phone cost deter you?
Steve: I've been on all day!
Garfield: I've just found out Micronet charged the number and the phone charge was 9p for four minutes and I'm on four to six hours a day!
Steve: *How much???*

At that point all hell broke loose and the interview came to an end!

Everyone's very sociable on the chatlines, and it's a good way to let off steam. The chatting on *Turbo* starts about 6pm and goes on way into the early hours. And those who've been to parties are even merrier.

So if you find a modem in your stocking this Christmas, just log on to Prestel and key ⋆TURBO# or ⋆11411. You'll be glued for hours.